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# CONFRONTING ANTISEMITISM THROUGH THE AGES

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

*Edited by Armin Lange, Kerstin Mayerhofer,  
Dina Porat et al.*

AN END TO ANTISEMITISM!



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## **Comprehending Antisemitism through the Ages: A Historical Perspective**

# **An End to Antisemitism!**



Edited by

Armin Lange, Kerstin Mayerhofer, Dina Porat,  
and Lawrence H. Schiffman

## **Volume 3**

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# Table of Contents

## **Preface and Acknowledgements — IX**

Kerstin Mayerhofer and Armin Lange

**Comprehending Antisemitism through the Ages: Introduction — 1**

## **Comprehending Antisemitism in Antiquity and Late Antiquity**

Leonard Rutgers

**Early Christian Anti-Judaism — 31**

Armin Lange

**Jew-Hatred in Antiquity: Cultural, Legal, and Physical Forms of Antisemitic Persecution — 41**

Erich S. Gruen

**The Blood Libel and the Leper Libel: Ancient Antisemitism? — 79**

Paula Fredriksen

**Divinity, Ethnicity, Identity: “Religion” as a Political Category in Christian Antiquity — 101**

## **Comprehending Antisemitism in the Middle Ages**

Robert Chazan

**The Evolution of Anti-Jewish Imagery in Medieval Christian Europe — 123**

Kerstin Mayerhofer

**Inferiority Embodied: The ‘Men-struating’ Jew and Pre-Modern Notions of Identity and Difference — 135**

Sara Offenberg

**“All the World’s a Stage”: Imagined Jewish Rituals in Medieval Christian Art and Drama — 161**

Birgit Wiedl

**Anti-Jewish Legislation in the Middle Ages — 183**

## **Comprehending Antisemitism in Modern Times**

Michael Wladika

**Georg Ritter von Schönerers Radikalisierung zum Rassenantisemiten vom Linzer Programm 1882 bis zur Gründung des „Verbandes der Deutschnationalen“ 1885 — 219**

Richard S. Levy

**The Defense against Antisemitism: Minor Victories, Major Defeats, 1890–1939 — 233**

Doron Rabinovici

**The Jewish Response to Antisemitism in Austria Prior to the Anschluss — 245**

Matthias Küntzel

**Nazi Propaganda in the Middle East and its Repercussions in the Postwar Period — 257**

## **Comprehending Shoah and Post-Shoah Antisemitism**

Dina Porat

**Is the Holocaust a Unique Historical Event? A Debate between Two Pillars of Holocaust Research and its Impact on the Study of Antisemitism — 275**

Florette Cohen Abady and Daniel Kaplin

**Caribbean Jewry: A Model of Tolerance or Assimilation? — 295**

Gennady Estraikh

**Sholem Aleichem and Qumran: Jewish-Related Scholarship in the Soviet Union, 1953–1967 — 325**

Alan Silberstein

**Sister Rose Thering's Battle against Antisemitism — 347**

Alvin H. Rosenfeld  
**Antisemitism in Today's America — 367**

Haim Fireberg  
**Antisemitic Perceptions and Jewish Sense of Belonging — 393**

## **Comprehending Anti-Zionism as a Virulent Form of “New Antisemitism”**

Matthias J. Becker  
**The German Left and Israel — 411**

Linda Giesel  
**Comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany in Contemporary  
German Discourse — 443**

Florian Markl  
**“Israel Threatens to Defend Itself”: The Depiction of Israel in the  
Media — 465**

**Editorial Board — 479**

**List of Contributors — 481**

**Acknowledgements — 483**





## Preface and Acknowledgements

Antisemitism has an age-old tradition. The “longest hatred”<sup>1</sup> can be traced back into ancient times, continued through the Middle Ages into modernity and reached its peak during the Nazi era. While one might assume that the atrocities of the Shoah would have resulted in an ideological about-face, antisemitism, on the contrary, is on the rise globally yet again. Today, the unfathomable tradition of discrimination against Jews, insults, and antisemitic hate crimes is carried out by political, religious, and lay groups from all sides of the political spectrum. Many of them are drawing on historical traditions of antisemitic discrimination and of stereotyping Jews as the scapegoats for a multitude of past and present societal problems. Given this unacceptable reality, in February 2018, approximately one thousand scholars, activists, decision makers, and influencers met in Vienna at the conference “An End to Antisemitism!” The conference was jointly organized by the European Jewish Congress, New York University, Tel Aviv University, and the University of Vienna to study antisemitism with an unprecedented interdisciplinary breadth and historical depth. Over 150 presenters from all over the world engaged with all forms of antisemitism from a variety of perspectives. The present series, *An End to Antisemitism!*, documents the conference’s output and research results from various fields. Leading experts in religious studies, history, political studies, social sciences, philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, and cultural studies shed light on antisemitic traditions from all their respective viewpoints. Together, they help to shape a discourse of understanding, knowing, and recognizing various forms of antisemitism in order to confront and combat them.

One of the aims of the conference “An End to Antisemitism!” was, therefore, to create concrete policy recommendations regarding how to effectively combat antisemitism. These have been collected and published in a separate *Catalogue of Policies*,<sup>2</sup> a document of practical impact. They also form one of the bases of the first volume of the present series.<sup>3</sup> All subsequent volumes are addressed to an academic audience. They document the research leading to these policy recommendations.

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1 R. S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (London: Methuen, 1991).

2 A. Lange, A. Muzicant, D. Porat, L. H. Schiffman, and M. Weitzman, *An End to Antisemitism! A Catalogue of Policies to Combat Antisemitism* (Brussels: European Jewish Congress, 2018).

3 A. Lange, K. Mayerhofer, D. Porat, and L. H. Schiffman, eds., *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, vol. 1 of *An End to Antisemitism!* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019).

The present volume focuses on the history of antisemitism. Its contributions document historical traditions that have fed contemporary antisemitism and unearth different motivations for antisemitic persecution through the ages. As such, they scrutinize antisemitism's versatile nature and multiple transformations. Following a five-part chronological structure, the articles in the present volume trace antisemitism from antiquity to the Middle Ages, from the eighteenth century to the Nazi era and the Shoah, from the end of World War II to the founding of the State of Israel, and well into our present time where the internet and modern media have contributed beyond measure to the increase of Jew-hatred.

The contributors' theoretical approaches vary in accordance with the topics and research fields their articles engage with and come from. Some contributions follow a classical historiographical path, working with original sources to trace historical traditions of antisemitism or document historical events and incidences. Other articles, however, chose a more metatheoretical approach, going beyond a documentation alone. Rather, they investigate historical manifestations of antisemitism to find answers to questions about pre-modern perceptions of race and racism as well as to learn about different motivations for antisemitic discrimination in order to establish means for combatting current-day Jew-hatred. A general introduction to the volume brings together these different approaches as well as theoretical aspects of the history and historiography of antisemitism.

A project like this volume, and the whole series, surely cannot be completed without the assistance of other individuals. Therefore, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to a list of people who have supported us in shaping this volume and bringing it to life.

First, we would like to give a word of thanks to all our colleagues who have contributed to the present volume. Their research documents a vast interdisciplinarity of fields that makes not only the present volume but the complete series *An End to Antisemitism!* an unparalleled publication.

We are grateful to De Gruyter Publishers for accepting our five-volume series of conference proceedings for publication. The support that Albrecht Döhnert, Sophie Wagenhofer, and Alice Meroz gave us in preparing these mammoth proceedings for publication has been exemplary. The same gratitude is due to Anna Cwikla. As with all previous volumes, she has made an enormous effort in proof-reading, copyediting, and English stylizing.

The other editors are especially grateful to Kerstin Mayerhofer for taking the lead in editing our proceedings. Her commitment has been unparalleled, and without her, neither the present volume nor the other outcomes of the conference would exist.

Of course, a project like this requires significant funds, which are often surprisingly difficult to raise. It is therefore more than a pleasure to express our gratitude to our main sponsor Moshe Kantor, President of the European Jewish Congress. Moshe Kantor provided much needed financial support not only for the conference “An End to Antisemitism!” in 2018 but also for all its printed outcomes. At the same time, we would also like to take the opportunity to convey words of thanks to all other sponsors as listed on pages 485–86.

Many more people have been involved in the project. They participated in the conference in 2018 and have supported us in the preparation of the conference proceedings. All their names are listed in volume one of *An End to Antisemitism!*<sup>4</sup>

New York, Tel Aviv, and Vienna, November 17, 2020

Armin Lange  
Kerstin Mayerhofer  
Dina Porat  
Lawrence H. Schiffman

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<sup>4</sup> Lange, Mayerhofer, Porat, and Schiffman, *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism*, xi–xvii.



Kerstin Mayerhofer and Armin Lange

# Comprehending Antisemitism through the Ages: Introduction

Robert Wistrich's definition of antisemitism as the "longest hatred"<sup>1</sup> carries as much weight now as it did thirty years ago, when Wistrich published his landmark study. Today, in our contemporary societies and culture, antisemitism is on the rise, and its manifestations are manifold. Antisemitic hate crimes have spiked in recent decades, and antisemitic stereotypes, sentiments, and hate speech have permeated all parts of the political spectrum. In order to effectively counteract the ever-growing Jew-hatred of our times, it is important to recognise the traditions that have fed antisemitism throughout history. Antisemitism is an age-old hatred deeply embedded in societies around the globe. While the internet and modern media have contributed beyond measure to the increase of Jew-hatred in all parts of the world, the transformation processes that antisemitism has been undergoing through the ages remain the same. A core condition of antisemitism is its versatile nature and adaptability, both of which can be traced through all periods of time. Current-day antisemitism is shaped and sustained not only by powerful precedents but also reflects common fears and anxieties that our societies are faced with in a world that is ever changing and where the changes run even faster today than ever before. Historical awareness of the nature of antisemitism, therefore, is more important than ever. The present volume, thus, wants to help raise this awareness. Its articles trace the history of antisemitism and the tradition of antisemitic stereotypes through the ages. It documents various manifestations of antisemitism over time and reflects on the varying motivations for antisemitism. As such, these contributions shed light on socio-cultural and socio-psychological processes that have led to the spike of antisemitism in various periods of time and in varying intensity. In this way, they can help to establish methods and policies to not only to counter current antisemitic manifestations but also to combat them.

## Terminology and Historiographical Delineation

The usage of the term *antisemitism* is much debated in historical scholarship. Various scholars claim that the term reflects a conceptualisation of Judaism as

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1 R. S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (London: Methuen, 1991).

a race, which can only be understood in the context of nationalism and racial theory in the early nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Earlier forms of Jew-hatred are therefore mostly referred to as “anti-Judaism,” therein reflecting theological concepts. Christian religious stereotypes of Jews are largely connected to doctrines of false beliefs and practices competing with Christianity. However, much of Christian polemic directed against Jews expresses negative images and attitudes in a way that reaches far beyond the scope of religious alterity. The frequent claim that calling pre-modern Jew-hatred *antisemitic* is an anachronism can only be accepted with regards to terminology. In fact, the term *antisemitism* did not come into existence and has not been used to describe Jew-hatred before the nineteenth century. Various forms of persecution of the Jews not solely based on religious grounds, however, can be traced back well into ancient times.

Despite the conference being based on the IHRA’s Working Definition of Antisemitism,<sup>3</sup> several contributions employ different definitions of antisemitism. While some essays perceive all forms of Jew-hatred and anti-Jewish discrimination as antisemitic, others are more restrictive in their use of the term antisemitism as mentioned above.

A volume that tries to trace the historical roots of antisemitism cannot do so without a delineation of the historical periods it discusses. The history of antisemitism evolves in accordance with socio-political processes as well as alongside certain cultural events shaping the histories of thought and culture. The editors of the present volume have chosen to structure the volume accordingly: (1) Ancient and Late Ancient Times, from the end of the Iron age, ca. 550 B.C.E., to the period of early Muslim conquests in Western Europe ca. 630–800 C.E. (2) Medieval Times until the invention of the printing press, c. 1440, as a technique that had a significant influence on both the history of thought and the history of socio-cultural and socio-political ideologies. (3) Modern Times starting with the American and the French revolutions of the years 1775–1783 and 1789–1799, respectively. (4) An era of “New Antisemitism” follow-

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2 Cf. e.g. W. Bergmann, *Geschichte des Antisemitismus* (München: C. H. Beck, 2002); C. Guillaumin, *L'idéologie raciste: Genèse et langage actuel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972); J. Heil, “‘Antijudaismus’ und ‘Antisemitismus’: Begriffe als Bedeutungsträger,” *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 6 (1997): 92–114; G. I. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); T. Nipperdey and R. Rürup, “Antisemitismus,” in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972), 129–53.

3 For further detail, refer to volume 1 of the present series, A. Lange, K. Mayerhofer, D. Porat, and L. H. Schiffman, eds., *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, vol. 1 of *An End to Antisemitism!* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 565–67.

ing the Shoah, with a subdivision (5) about Anti-Zionism as a most virulent manifestation of this “New Antisemitism.”

Two insufficiencies have to be admitted in this structure. First, certain historical periods and events are not addressed, for example, early modern times or the Spanish Inquisition. This is mainly due to the fact that several colleagues who covered these fields at the conference were not able to contribute to the present volume. Second, the perspective from which contributors to the present volume reflect on the history of antisemitism is rather Eurocentric. Much of the history of Jew-hatred documented in the present volume focuses on the geographical regions of Western Europe. Discussions of antisemitism in the United States and reflections on anti-Zionism directed against Israel are a geographical exception. However, these articles too are based largely on a European discourse of thought. Unfortunately, a single volume can hardly take all global aspects into consideration. Therefore, several of the missing topics, such as Islam or a variety of manifestations of “New Antisemitism,” are addressed in volumes 2 and 5 of the present series.<sup>4</sup> Still, the editors of the present volume are aware that the historical picture of antisemitism in this volume is by necessity incomplete and, thus, sometimes ambiguous.

## Claiming Authority and Appealing to Emotions

When working on the history of antisemitism, two different aspects need to be taken into consideration with regards to the transmission and evaluation of antisemitic stereotypes and traditions. Antisemitic stereotypes and traditions can be transmitted in the form of an authorizing re-writing, that is, with references to older source material. Early modern and modern thinkers who fostered antisemitic sentiments were keen on attributing their own antisemitic polemic to a pseudo-scientific discourse. In referencing a canon of antisemitic stereotypes and traditions, which had been transmitted from late ancient and medieval times, early modern writers ensured continuity for their own antisemitic thoughts and claims. An important example for this practice can be found in Antonius Margaritha’s (1492/8–1542) treatise of 1530, titled *The Entire Jewish Faith*.<sup>5</sup> Having once experienced doubt in

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. Lange, K. Mayerhofer, D. Porat, and L. H. Schiffman, eds., *Confronting Antisemitism from the Perspectives of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism*, and *ibid.*, *Confronting Antisemitism in Modern Media, the Legal and Political Worlds*, vols. 2 and 5 of *An End to Antisemitism!* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020 and 2021).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Antonius Margaritha, *Der gantz Jüdisch Glaub mit sampt ainer gründtlichen und warhafften Anzaygunge ...* (Augsburg: Heinrich Steiner, 1530).



his own faith, as a convert from Judaism to Christianity, Margaritha was able to turn both to doubting Christians in an effort to strengthen their belief but also to Jews in an attempt to convince them to follow his own path to Christianity. His depiction of Jewish rituals, customs, and ceremonies in *The Entire Jewish Faith* is accurate. However, Margaritha's main objective is a presentation of Judaism as a religion that had failed to understand and accept God's true revelation and, thus, poses a danger to the Christian faith. For this purpose, Margaritha drew on a vast canon of medieval polemic against Jews, on antagonistic narratives, motifs, and imagery of Jews as friends of the devil, aggressors against Christ's body, and as murderers of Christian children. Superstitions and further stereotypes, some theologically motivated and some not, were used to demonstrate the Jews' ongoing religious inferiority as proof and reason for their socio-economic and legal marginalisation.

Many early modern thinkers and writers followed Margaritha's example and support a discourse of religious and socio-cultural superiority of one religious-cultural group over another. An example is the ongoing conflict between Catholics and Protestants in early modern and modern times and their fight for political supremacy, which motivates an extensive engagement with the Jews as their common age-old opposite. Whether within the frame of the doctrinal battle between Catholics and Protestants or not, Judaism was regarded as inferior, and Jews were subjected to discrimination, marginalisation, and subordination. Theological and, increasingly, sociological and pseudo-scientific disputes corroborated processes of identity formation—first, on a religious level but subsequently also within the contexts of nation and race. These contexts gained importance especially at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when new theories on human thought and race had emerged. Social Darwinism and racism greatly influenced antisemitic thinkers such as Carl Wilhelm Friedrich Grattenauer (1773–1838), Achim von Arnim (1781–1831), and Clemens Brentano (1778–1842) who found their own antisemitic beliefs confirmed by these theories and, subsequently, referenced them to increase the authority and significance of their polemics. Concepts of social norms were established and projected back onto specific ways of life, expressions of thought and signs of the body. Notions of a distorted and diseased “Jewish body,” which is considered the result of a false religious, cultural, and social lifestyle, were shaped extensively during this period but stand in the tradition of medieval Christian-Jewish polemic. During modern times, however, they were considered less as the result of divine punishment, but were rather interpreted as reflecting a specific mindset and lifestyle as well as anthropological conditions.

Referencing earlier sources and incorporating pseudo-scientific theories of nation, race, and biology into polemical writing helped to create authority when appealing to one's audience. Methods like these were and are used to

file specific socio-political or socio-economical claims and support processes of formation or strengthening of specific group-identities vis-à-vis a proclaimed inferior opposite. They shape political processes and legal regulations directed against such alleged inferior groups. Antisemitic agitation, however, can take yet another form—as an appeal to emotion. Stereotypes and discriminatory claims about the Jews’ corrupt nature and diseased bodies, for example, are shaped as “arguments from passion” that aim to manipulate a recipient’s emotions in order to convince them of polemical content. Antisemitic polemic appeals especially to feelings of fear and anxiety as well as of anger and pride. This becomes rather apparent when antisemitic stereotypes are mutually exclusive and shift radically across time and space—examples include the condemnation of Jews as radical communists and as avaricious capitalists at the same time. In cases like these, Jews become a target for the projection of a non-Jewish group’s fears arising especially during times of social disruption. Antisemitism as a social phenomenon appealing to emotions can be witnessed throughout the ages from the fall of the Roman Empire, to the time of the Crusades, from the era of the Black Death to the Franco-Prussian War, following World War I, during the Depression in the United States or in the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War years. In the last decades, the spike of Muslim antisemitism, too, can be connected to social and political changes in the Arab world that lead to increased fear, anxiety, and anger among their civil societies.

Processes of claiming authority and of appealing to emotions can be witnessed among antisemitic thinkers until today. Leading figures of openly antisemitic groups tend to authorise their polemic claims in reference to earlier sources. They try to legitimise contemporary antisemitic discrimination and persecution by referencing ancient and medieval stereotypes of the Jews as economic exploiters and as antisocial, evil members of society. Pseudo-scientific arguments of the Jews as a “lesser race” in accordance with modern racist and nationalist thinking conflate with these groups’ own emotionally charged reservation against Jews. Such polemics become all the more dangerous when coming from a person who claims scholarly authority, as in the case of Thomas Dalton. Dalton claims to be a professor of humanities at a major US university and has published extensively on the history of antisemitism, the Shoah, and the National Socialist era from a clearly antisemitic point of view. His publications appear in white nationalist presses and journals. He has translated multiple works from National Socialist thinkers, among them also Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* and contemporary pro-Nazi historians. In conflating his alleged scholarly knowledge with his own emotionally charged polemics against Jews, Dalton reaches many followers who are willing to attribute a great importance and historical diligence to both his work and his antisemitic polemic. On the other hand, antisemitic agitators

such as the website *smoloko.com*, poisoned their followers' minds without any need for further academic, scientific, or historical accuracy and authority. Caricatures, graphics, memes, and short polemical texts were often radical and sensational, sometimes even including pornographic elements, and appeal to their recipients' emotions of fear, anxiety, anger, and pride to create an atmosphere of resentment which, in turn, also functions as the shared feeling to keep the hate group together. Both processes—claiming historical and scholarly authority and appealing to emotion—often intersect and link to take extreme forms in violent attacks against Jewish life and institutions. This has recently been the case with, for example, Robert G. Bowers who was responsible for the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting in 2018. His terrorist attack was both religiously motivated and fuelled by consuming both emotionally charged polemics online and pseudo-scientifically authorised writing.

## Definition, Transformation, Motivation

Based on these aspects of antisemitic traditions through the ages, in addressing the history of antisemitism the present volume has a triple focus. As a first major topic, its contributions address the *definition* of antisemitism itself. As mentioned above, different articles in the present volume apply different definitions of antisemitism understanding it as a form discrimination based on religion, race, or an intersectional canon of determinatory categories of identity. The articles of this volume apply their terminology accordingly. However, what unifies the articles dealing with the definition of antisemitism is a historiographical approach. They do not only theoretically reflect on questions of identity and racism but also discuss their historical beginnings, transmission, and transformations. The latter is the present volume's second major focus.

The history of antisemitism is characterised by multiple *transformations* and its overall versatile nature. Religiously motivated resentments against Jews as adherents to an outdated faith who allegedly murdered Christ helped to shape European Christian identities. Ideas of hereditary inferiority of certain groups of people have greatly contributed to this process of identity formation, not only within Christianity. Antisemitism has taken different forms accordingly, from religious to cultural hatred and persecution in the beginning, and resulting in increased socio-political persecution and the curtailment of economic, political, and legal advancement of Jews beginning already in pre-modern times. Physical aggression and violence against Jews and their institutions, such as synagogues and other places of Jewish life, have always been an expression of Jew-hatred. All of them are manifestations of antisemitism in different varieties,

corroborated by religious doctrine, by pseudo-scientific theories, by referencing earlier sources, and by appealing to emotions of fear, anxiety, anger, and pride in the respective non-Jewish group opposing Judaism. Documenting these manifestations and, thus, tracing the transformational processes of antisemitism, is one of the aims and major focuses of the present volume. Modern and contemporary transformations of antisemitism in accordance with significant changes in modern information technology, especially with the rise of the internet, are dealt with in volume 5 of the present series in more detail and more extensively.<sup>6</sup> Contributions to volume 5 are concerned with the question of what has enabled the transformation of contemporary antisemitism into a sentiment that is not only commonly accepted in all parts of all societies around the world but also is ever increasing. This increase in antisemitism is an imminent danger not only for Jewish communities around the globe but also questions and threatens the system of societal norms and values on a wholesale scale. While volume 5 focuses largely on the internet and modern media as the most important and main multipliers of contemporary Jew-hatred, contributions to the present volume deal more with the historical processes that have led to the current transformation of Jew-hatred into this new form of antisemitism in recent decades.

A third and last major topic of this volume, finally, is the question of what *motivates* antisemitism. As a response to societal or political changes, the motivations and intentions of antisemitic discrimination and persecution vary in different periods of time. They can only be understood as a combination of cultural reasons, for example, following certain societal or political ideological discourses, and of socio-psychological reasons, such as with regards to the above-mentioned appeal to emotions like fear and anxiety. Opportunism and pressures to conform can also support the generation of a sentiment directed against an opposite socio-cultural group to strengthen one's self-identity. Socio-economic conditions, too, are an important factor and the curtailment of socio-economic advancement for certain groups within a society is a prevalent means to marginalise the group's overall influence onto a society. The mutability of motivations for antisemitism runs parallel to its history of constant transformation. This is why many of the contributions to the present volume reflect on manifestations of antisemitism and its intentions from an integrational perspective.

The multiple focuses of the present volume are also reflected in its structure. Contributions to the present volume fall into two different categories that call for a separate understanding and contextualisation. Some articles reflect on an-

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. A. Lange, K. Mayerhofer, D. Porat, and L. H. Schiffman, eds. *Confronting Antisemitism in Modern Media, the Legal and Political Worlds*, vol. 5 of *An End to Antisemitism!* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021).

tisemitism and its historical tradition using a metatheoretical perspective. They try to comprehend antisemitism as cultural concept and unearth its origins, which can reach as far back as antiquity but still impact present times. These articles try to build bridges from contemporary to historical times in order to better understand current-day situations and events. Such metatheoretical articles can mostly be found in parts 1 and 2 on pre-modern times. On the other hand, the present volume features articles using classical historiographical approaches. They do not try to establish links between the present and the past, rather, they aim to document historical events and processes that have led to certain antisemitic incidents. Contributions with such a historiographical approach fall mostly into parts 3 and 4 of the present volume. Scholars of modern and contemporary history are faced with a multitude of sources and material that needs to be documented carefully in a first step to ensure accurate interpretation. The present volume represents both scholarly approaches and therein also aims at mirroring processes within the academic community scrutinizing the history of antisemitism. Recent trends in historical scholarship of antisemitism with regards to the understanding of new forms of antisemitism expressed in new media, such as the internet, are represented in the fifth and last part of the present volume. All of the various scholarly approaches reflected in the present volume lay the foundation for the three major topics that the present volume focuses on.

## **Comprehending Antisemitism in Antiquity and Late Antiquity**

Antiquity and late antiquity are often neglected periods in the study of the history of antisemitism. Historical surveys of Jew-hatred mostly dedicate only brief chapters to it, and larger studies of the history of (late) ancient antisemitism are rare. This neglect is largely grounded in the claims that antisemitism is a modern invention and that Jew-hatred only played a marginal role in antiquity. The contributions in this part of the present volume thus address the question of whether antisemitism already existed in ancient and late ancient times and find different and diverse answers. Results vary in accordance with the understanding of antisemitism as a distinct form of racism and, more importantly, in accordance with the definition of racism itself. Many historians claim racism to be a concept closely connected to the history of trans-Atlantic slave trade and to the notion of biological differences between groups of people. Accordingly, they query the existence of antisemitism in ancient times as a form of hatred encompassing early concepts of identity that linked categories of both religion and race (Gruen).

However, if racism and race are understood as resulting from the creation of a hierarchy between groups as their constitutional element, even early forms of Jew-hatred can be considered to be a form of racism, or, more precisely, antisemitism. Already in antiquity, Jews were subjected to different forms of cultural and physical persecution resulting from an overall claim about their general inferiority with regards to both their religion and nature.<sup>7</sup> Most of the contributions to this part of the present volume try to shed more light onto this controversy. Based on contemporary source material from various backgrounds, these contributions engage with questions about the construction of a Christian identity in both antiquity and late antiquity (Rutgers). Dissociated from “real” Judaism, Christianity created a “hermeneutical” Judaism that was depicted as a demonic power of the past to empower a Christian supersessionist identity and the “True Israel.” When Christianity gained power in the Roman Empire, Christian antisemitic ideology enabled the legal and physical persecution of Jews in an effort to construct and maintain an orthodox Christian identity against Jews and heretics being depicted as Jews. Accordingly, the articles in this part demonstrate that cultural, legal, and physical persecution as the three basic forms of antisemitic persecution existed already in antiquity. This points to the creation of a system of antisemitic traditions that since antiquity served to identify the Jewish “Other” (Lange). Therein, Jew-hatred served the construction of a Christian identity significantly. Additionally, the concept of a “hermeneutical Jew,” discussed by Cohen<sup>8</sup> and Nirenberg<sup>9</sup> as a figure that assumed distinctive character and bodily characteristics and narrative significance in pre-modern thought and culture, can already be found in early Christian literature (Rutgers). A last contribution provides an important perspective for the study of medieval and modern antisemitism in identifying Visigothic canon law as laying the groundwork of racist antisemitism (Fredriksen).

Engaging with *Early Christian Anti-Judaism*, Leonard RUTGERS deals with the questions about what it was that ancient Christian antisemites were afraid of and why. He further investigates how ancient Christian Jew-hatred affected Jewish-Christian relations in antiquity generally and what were its structural and long-term effects. Regarding Jew-hatred, Rutgers finds four characteristics in ancient Christian texts: (1) antisemitic sentiments are “always there, humming in the background constantly” (33) as they can already be found in the earliest lay-

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7 Cf. B. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1–52.

8 Cf. J. Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 10–19.

9 Cf. D. Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: Norton, 2013).

ers of the New Testament and have influenced Christian thought ever since. (2) Notions directed against Jews appear in virtually all genres of ancient Christian literature. (3) Antisemitic thought was geographically evenly spread in ancient Christianity from Mesopotamia to Spain and expressed in all languages ancient Christians used. And, finally, (4) the Jews that ancient Christian texts agitate against are disconnected from real Jews and represent a hermeneutical construct. These “hermeneutical Jews” were constructed based on biblical exegesis and are thus “figments of scriptural imagination” (33). Christian theologians engaged with this kind of antisemitic negative-identity formation out of internal needs and aim thus mainly at internal consumption. The self-referential early Christian antisemitism was aimed mainly at a Christian in-group for purposes of identity construction. This supersessionist identity construction changed dramatically when Christianity became an official religion in the fourth century C.E. and thus had to deal with their Jewish neighbours on a manifest real-life level. While this experience did not lead ancient Christianity to question their concept of hermeneutical Judaism, it led to an explosion of antisemitic rhetoric and even antisemitic violence trying to communicate the hermeneutical construct of a theological obsolete Jewish “Other” into a historical reality. In this way, “the Fathers of the early Church were doing little else than laying the groundwork for letting anti-Jewish notions enter into the capillaries of Christian theology in ways that would profoundly influence and, in fact, spoil Jewish-Christian relations for much of the remainder of European history” (38).

In his article *Jew-Hatred in Antiquity: Cultural, Legal, and Physical Forms of Antisemitic Persecution*, Armin LANGE provides an exemplary survey of Jew-hatred in antiquity. In this survey, he engages with three questions: (1) Did antisemitism exist in antiquity? (2) What forms of antisemitic persecution occurred in antiquity? (3) What relevance does ancient Jew-hatred have for latter forms of antisemitism? Lange argues that not only did Jew-hatred exist in antiquity, but it was even a popular theme in ancient Christian literature with prevalence in most Christian texts. From an ancient viewpoint, the absence of antisemitism can therefore only be argued if antisemitism is restricted to racist Jew-hatred alone. Racist Jew-hatred, however, is evident at least with the Visigothic kingdom in Spain. Already in antiquity, the three basic forms of how Jews were persecuted can be observed. Physical forms of persecution targeted the physical well-being of individual Jews or large Jewish groups and included (mass) killing of Jews, sometimes even on a regular basis. Legislative and judicial persecution discriminated against Jews by judicial means or by creating laws suppressing Jewish life and curtailing their social, economic, and political advancement. Cultural persecution aimed ultimately at the destruction of the cultural and religious identity of Jews and Judaism in antiquity and thus wanted to achieve a cul-

tural genocide. Antisemites continue to practice all three forms of antisemitic persecution through today. These three forms of antisemitic persecution did not solely lay the ground work of medieval and modern antisemitism already in antiquity. Ancient pagan and Christian antisemites also created a system of antisemitic religious symbols, which, as Lange argues, served as guidance for antisemites and others on how to comprehend and perceive Jews. Communicated through various Christian channels, the antisemitic symbol system grew until today and is largely responsible for the reinvention of Jew-hatred in each epoch of history. Ancient pagan and Christian antisemites, thus, laid the ideological foundations on which even contemporary antisemites build.

Focusing on *The Blood Libel and the Leper Libel: Ancient Antisemitism?*, Erich S. GRUEN does not want to deny the existence of suspicion, disdain, and antipathy toward Jews in antiquity but thinks that they did not rise “to the level of antisemitism” (96). According to Gruen, the examples of the blood libel and the leper libel corroborate the claim that the impact of ancient Jew-hatred was “far less consequential than is often realized” (96). As neither blood libel nor leper libel had any traction in the pagan world, Gruen regards Jew-hatred as a marginal phenomenon in pagan antiquity that cannot be described as antisemitism. This would be all the more true as antisemitism would be racist in nature and thus alien to antiquity.

In her article *Divinity, Ethnicity, Identity: “Religion” as a Political Category in Christian Antiquity*, Paula FREDRIKSEN points to the ethnic affiliation of religion in antiquity as a point often overlooked in the study of (ancient) antisemitism: “cult was an ethnic designation, and ethnicity was a cult designation” (102). In some cases, the scruples of Jews regarding the participation in a public cult irritated pagan ethnographers resulting in complaints about “Jewish *atheôtēs* (‘atheism’) or *asebeia* (‘impiety’) or *amixia* (avoidance of others)” (106). While the cultural importance of pagan groups faded with the rise of Christian orthodoxy to the Roman state religion, polemics against Jews continued to exist and were repurposed for use by the later gentile churches. In addition, all non-Orthodox Christians became heretics and were regarded as a security threat to the Roman Empire. While gentile Christian polemical rhetoric targeting Jews served before to separate the gentile Christian from a demonised Jew in a binary system, the rhetoric *contra Iudaeos* was now applied to Christian heretics, which likened them to “the Jews.” Jews, heretics, and pagans became thus “the objects of unwanted popular attention, legal harassment, and urban violence” (110). The reasons for the blooming Jew-hatred of late antiquity had thus “nothing directly to do with real Jews and everything to do with imperial efforts to define, mandate, and control ‘orthodoxy’” (111). In this transition from the practical pluralism of antiquity to the statutory definition of religion in late antiquity, the legal



situation of pagans, heretics, and Jews became thus permanently destabilised as religion was no longer an ethnic patrimony but a political choice. The next paradigm shift in the history of Jew-hatred followed with the conversion of the Visigothic Arian church to Roman Christianity in the years 587–589 C.E. The conversion was aimed at unifying an ethnically and religiously mixed kingdom. In uniting the Visigothic Spanish state with the Nicene Catholic church, the Visigoths reinterpreted the ancient ethnic affiliation of religion thus defining by legal means “the Goth” as a new ethnic identity for Hispano-Romans. In this process, the Jewish Romans of the Spanish Peninsula lost their legal and social standing and were forced to either convert or to become pariahs that were eventually banished. However, in later Visigothic canon law, converted Jews were not regarded as Christians but as “baptised Jews” or simply “Jews.” Visigothic canon law thus created a racist approach to Jew-hatred that had devastating consequences in the history of Judaism.

## Comprehending Antisemitism in the Middle Ages

Most of the contributions in this part of the present volume deal less with historiographical descriptions of Jewish life in Medieval Western Europe. Rather, they inquire into medieval perceptions and, often times, imaginations of Jews from a pre-modern Christian perspective (Chazan, Mayerhofer, Offenbergl). They operate with the concept of the “hermeneutical Jew.” Antisemitic imagery in Medieval Christian Europe evolved much around this hermeneutical Jew who was imagined to represent every form of aberration from Christian doctrine. Jews were considered to be and, subsequently, constructed and described as blind believers in the wrong faith, stubbornly clinging to their scripture’s literal and ultimate meaning, as hostile toward the saving role of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary’s mercy, as economic exploiters in their roles as money-lenders, as asocial and members of a secluded group plotting against their Christian neighbours, and as wicked evil-doers, well-poisoners, and child murderers. In all of these stereotypes, commonly known from the Middle Ages even today, the link between emotionally charged aversion against a non-Christian “Other” and the process of rationalisation in various forms—theologically, scientifically, and legally—is apparent. Like in the previous part of this volume, the articles in this part, too, are concerned with the construction of Christian identity vis-à-vis their Jewish opposite who was claimed to be inferior, both on a spiritual and a manifest corporeal, societal, and political level. Aiming at unearthing the processes underlying this construction of Christian identity, the articles engage with medieval sources from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries and analyse trans-

mitted imagery, motifs, and narratives. A fourth article (Wiedl), in turn, takes a more historiographical approach in documenting medieval legislation that was directed against Jews and that curtailed their socio-economic advancement in a Western Christian society. However, this contribution too is based on the widely accepted assumption that antisemitic thoughts and actions were prevalent throughout the Middle Ages at all times and in all parts of society with medieval legislation being only one contributor to and manifestation of medieval Jew-hatred, based on the understanding of Jews and Judaism as inferior and, thus, as subject to social, political, and legal subordination.

Robert CHAZAN traces the *Evolution of Anti-Jewish Imagery in Medieval Christian Europe*. Christian images of the Jews as a general threat to the societal order generated and fostered radical stereotypes directed against Jews which, even today, function as one of the foundations of modern and contemporary antisemitism. In his overview article, Chazan draws a line from Paul and his role in the Jesus movement to Augustine. Both had considered Jews and Judaism an aberration from the “True Israel,” based on their misunderstanding and active rejection of God’s revelation to them. Both positions, however, had hardly influenced Jewish daily life. It was not until the end of the first millennium that “western Christendom transformed itself from the weakest of the medieval religio-political power blocs into the strongest” (127) and brought about vast changes for the Jewish communities in North-Western Europe. The growing Christian communities in the European West and North pressed for a delineation of socio-political and socio-economic boundaries vis-à-vis their Jewish neighbours who had come to new parts in the Western world to find social and economic advancement. The Jewish “newcomers” were viewed with disfavour and as dissenting with Christian faith, followed by the evolution of a “new and baneful imagery of Judaism and Jews” (128) and resulting in a set of radically new negative stereotypes: a previous purported “deleterious Jewish religious impact” now transformed into notions of Jewish “societal harmfulness” beyond the religious sphere (130). The danger of these new stereotypes, however, lied, and continues to lie, in their intersectional power. Notions of economic exploitation in money-lending, or even more horrendous charges such as ritual murder linked with traditional Christian doctrine of the Jews as erroneous in their beliefs and guilty of the death of Jesus Christ. As such, these images laid the foundation for modern antisemitism and continue to flourish.

Kerstin MAYERHOFER engages with the role of cultural narratives in the process of formation of identity. She scrutinises the discourse of embodied inferiority and uses the example of the motif of Jewish “male menstruation” for her reflections on *Inferiority Embodied: The “Men-struating” Jew and Pre-modern Notions of Identity and Difference*. Based on the concept of racism and race as grounded in

a proclaimed hierarchy of one group of people over another, Mayerhofer presents the “men-struating” Jew as one motif in a canon of imagery surrounding the “Jewish body,” which, in turn, reflects back on pre-modern understandings of sex, gender, and, ultimately, race. In the example of the “men-struating” Jew, that is, the figure of a Jewish man afflicted with a regular flow of blood from his body, pre-modern Christian notions of difference and inferiority are reflected both on a cultural and on a “scientific” level. The example shows that pre-modern formation of identity is not solely based in culture or religion. Corporeal aspects, too, “served the construction as categories [of identity],” however, they were always “deeply connected with faith” (156). In presenting three sources from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries from a clerical, medical, and legal background, Mayerhofer uncovers the mechanisms that lie at the core of the establishment of the theme of an aberrant and inferior “Jewish body”: universalisation, naturalisation, and normalisation. These mechanisms linked, first theologically, to mark all generations of Jews as responsible and guilty for the death of Jesus Christ, secondly, and “scientifically,” to embody this hereditary guilt in images using somatic markers of distortedness conveying inferiority, and, finally, to “normalise and institutionalise the socio-political and socio-economic marginalisation and discrimination” (153) of the Jews.

In her article “*All the World’s a Stage*”: *Imagined Jewish Rituals in Medieval Christian Art and Drama*, Sara OFFENBERG addresses blood libels and host desecration allegations with a special focus on their imagined character in art and drama. She argues that the public sphere, that is, visual representations of antagonist allegations against Jews, such as images, poems, or plays, helped them gain currency. She focuses on two examples in vernacular languages, the first being Alfonso X’s *Cántigas de Santa Maria* (1284), a compilation of stories and songs, sometimes beautifully illustrated. The *Cántigas* provide scholars with much information “about the anti-Jewish attitude of Christian Castilian society” (165) grounded in the vast prevalence of stories about icon profanation and host desecration. A second example is given with the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* (1461) which, too, deals with a story about host desecration. In comparing both examples, OffenberG comes to the conclusion that although the narrative content of the stories and its transmitted themes do not vary much, the intentions of both sources differ with regards to their places of origin. While Jewish communities were still large and flourishing in late thirteenth-century Castile, medieval England could only report about Jews from a distant perspective, as Jews were no longer present on the British Isles since 1290. However, in both cases, OffenberG concludes, “the performance is intended for a Christian audience with a clear agenda,” (177) and while it tells us less about the actual Jewish rituals of the time and place, it can help us to understand how Jewish

daily life and ritual practice were perceived by the contemporary Christian majority society.

As mentioned above, Birgit WIEDL, in her article, takes a different approach. She engages with *Anti-Jewish Legislation in the Middle Ages* as a significant “part of medieval anti-Jewish thought and agenda to which it contributed both ideas and measures to act upon” (183). Her article is divided into three parts, the first deals with church law pertaining to the Jews. While church law had only limited effects on Jewish daily life, it can be identified as one of the most important transmitters of antisemitic stereotypes and narratives and supported their tradition well beyond the Middle Ages. In the second part about legislation of secular rulers, Wiedl carves out different strands of socio-political developments in different countries of the Christian Western Europe, which have led to a plurality of laws pertaining to the Jews. Countries that were influenced more strongly by church and canon law, such as England and France, also showed much tighter control of their Jewish communities. On the other hand, territories that would benefit from prospering Jewish communities, mostly financially but also in terms of imperial protection, such as in the Holy Roman Empire, were hesitant to incorporate anti-Jewish ideas into their legislation. In the last part of her article, Wiedl focuses on municipal and customary law, in which the Jews’ status is “even more diverse” (200). The few written sources demonstrate especially hostile thoughts against Jews, often expressed in the most emotive language and accompanied by gruesome illustrations. All in all, Wiedl concludes, medieval laws pertaining to the Jews significantly contributed to the retention of age-old antisemitic stereotypes in both the legislation of the church and of emerging modern states. As such, they “prepared the ground for policies of later centuries, such as the church’s demands of segregation and separation of Jewish and Christian living spaces, which, while only rarely carried out in the Middle Ages, were translated into the reality of the ghettos from the sixteenth century onwards” (209).

## Comprehending Antisemitism in Modern Times

As stated above, the present volume, unfortunately, lacks contributions focusing on the turn of the Middle Ages into the early modern age. Renaissance and early modern engagement with Judaism however, is grounded largely in pre-modern tradition. Pre-modern sources were scrutinised, re-interpreted, and employed to corroborate modern humanist claims about religion, culture, economy, politics, and society in general. Still, efforts were taken to establish a specific cultural, religious, and social identity often by focusing on one’s opposite. Christian

identity in the Middle Ages, as we have seen, was very much shaped through a process of delineation from a non-Christian, mostly Jewish, “Other.” Early modern thinkers largely followed this path, referencing earlier sources to authorise their own antagonist claims. As such, early modern writing is not a novel production but rather a re-production and re-shaping of earlier narratives of Jew-hatred.

At the end of the eighteenth century, antisemitism gains momentum—a process that runs parallel with a response to the emancipation of the Jews in Western European societies. Modern Jew-hatred takes the form of a pseudo-scientific racism, corroborated by contemporary racist theories and nationalism and following the structural changes in and the advent of civil society. Discrimination against and persecution of Jews based on racial claims reached their highpoint in the National Socialist era and continued well beyond that time. The contributions in this part of the present volume scrutinise the processes that have led to the rise of antisemitism starting with the eighteenth century. As such, they take a more historiographical approach than the articles in the previous sections. However, they do not document socio-political processes from a systematic and general position only, rather, they also focus on individual influences (Wladika). Another focus lies on the Jewish perspective—how Jews have responded to socio-political changes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and how they have tried to oppose them (Levy, Rabinovici). This section also sheds light onto the influences of modern European racist propaganda onto non-European societies, much of which laid the foundations for current-day Jew-hatred, especially in the Arab world (Küntzel).

Michael WLADIKA analyses *Georg Ritter von Schönerers Radikalisierung zum Rassenantisemiten vom Linzer Programm 1882 bis zur Gründung des “Verbandes der Deutschnationalen” 1885*. The antisemitic agitation by Georg Ritter von Schönerer propagated pan-Germanism and German nationalism in Austria and influenced Adolf Hitler’s antisemitism significantly. In his paper, Wladika traces the process of radicalisation that turned Schönerer from a purely far-right politician and opposer of political Catholicism into a racial antisemite. Five factors contributed to this transformation: (1) Schönerer’s thorough engagement with Eugen Dühring’s theories of Judaism as an inevitable enemy to all cultural nations, who in turn had to fiercely oppose this imminent threat. (2) This increasingly racial antisemitic notions that Schönerer took up led to his breach with the traditional nationalism and national socialism of his political predecessors. (3) Subsequently, other antisemites like Karl Lueger supported Schönerer in his political agitation, for example, in the case of the “Nordbahnskandal.” (4) Schönerer’s engagement in campaigns surrounding the election of the “Reichsrat” in 1885 served as a stage for his already increased racial antisemit-

ism in delineation from German nationalism. (5) Finally, the formation of the Social Democratic as well as the Christian Social Party contributed to Schönerer's radicalisation as he feared these parties' threat to German nationalist efforts.

In his article, Richard S. LEVY documents *The Defense against Antisemitism: Minor Victories, Major Defeats, 1890–1939*. He traces Jewish responses against antisemitic attacks starting in the 1880s until their vast silencing with the rise of Nazi ideology. Especially in the early years, a collective defence was difficult to mount since Jewish communities were scattered around Germany, and it was mostly individuals who spoke out against antisemitic oppression, among them Theodor Mommsen. At the end of the nineteenth century, however, a first association for defence against antisemitism took shape in the *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* [*Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith*]. To ensure successful opposition against antisemitic ideology, associations like the *Centralverein* aimed at respectability through vast publication, at intervention into electoral politics, supporting candidates actively opposing antisemitism, and at judicial pursuit of antisemitic accusations and discrimination. These strategies helped to win some important victories before the outbreak of World War I. However, when antisemitism was radicalised by the lost war, their tools lost much of their power. Even though the *Centralverein* was among the first to recognise the growing and imminent Nazi threat, it found itself “relatively helpless” vis-à-vis a growing organisation and structuralizing of antisemitism. Using the example of the *Centralverein*, Levy concludes that the pressing danger of antisemitism lies first and foremost in its nature, which is a conflation of superstitions and stereotypical prejudice and systematic manifestation of such prejudice. He therefore calls for an alliance with anti-antisemitic efforts from within the oppressed Jewish groups to stand up against oppression and discrimination in such a “prejudicial environment [...] from all walks of society” (242).

Doron RABINOVICI scrutinises *The Jewish Response to Antisemitism in Austria Prior to the Anschluss*. To properly understand the Jewish response to Austrian antisemitism, Rabinovici opens his article with an overview about Jewish life in Austria from the end of the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, focusing on Vienna as home for the largest Jewish community in the Habsburg monarchy. Prejudices surrounding Viennese Jews at the time radically fuelled contemporary antisemitism with their images of “the ‘Jew’ [...] as the leading representative of social change, a symbol of modern times as well as of old monotheism” (245), all corroborated by various nationalist efforts and forced assimilation. In this environment, Jewish political parties like the *Union of Austrian Jews* had formed to, first, “counter antisemitism in the courts of law, or through interventions and appeals to politicians” (246). Increasingly, however, they were

considered not proactive and not Zionist enough and active Zionist Socialists soon gained power. They called for a “search for Jewish self-awareness” (248) instead of proving their loyalty to Austria and Germany and mobilized for a Jewish state in Palestine. Orthodox association on the other hand “tried to counter Christian Social antisemitism by stressing religious values and explaining that Judaism was [...] merely a faith” (250). At the advent of the “Anschluss,” Austria’s annexation into Nazi Germany, all of the parties, however, saw their efforts coming to a halt as Austrian antisemitism shifted from a “tacitly agreed general mood [...]” to “the overt credo of the bourgeois parties” (253). As a conclusion, Rabinovici calls for a better understanding of the situation prior to 1938 to, similarly, better understand the situation in Nazi Vienna following the “Anschluss.” The “distinctive ambiance in Nazi Vienna” (254) had its foundation in antisemitic discrimination and legally corroborated the curtailment of the Jews’ status way before the annexation into Nazi Germany, and the Jewish community’s attempt to “safeguard its existence through patriotic compliance and loyalty” (254) had been in vain.

Matthias KÜNTZEL engages with *Nazi Propaganda in the Middle East and its Repercussions in the Postwar Period*. The tradition of Islamic antisemitism is deeply rooted in European ideological models. In his article, Küntzel focuses on narratives of Jewish world conspiracy and their transfer from Nazi propaganda to the Muslim world which took place between 1937 and 1945. He understands Islamic antisemitism as a particular form of Jew-hatred “based on the fusion of Islamic anti-Judaism from the old scriptures with modern European antisemitism” (000). His article demonstrates how this particular form of Islamic antisemitism subsequently became popularised within the Arab world. The booklet *Islam and Jewry*, issued in 1937 and often attributed to the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Mohammed Amin el-Husseini, serves Küntzel as one example for this transmission process. The Arabic-language program broadcast on Radio Zeesen outside of Berlin between 1939 and 1945 is a second example and considered the “most effective vehicle of Nazi propaganda” (263), as it helped to strengthen a reading of Islamic scripture that aimed at antisemitic agitation against Zionist ambitions. Both examples effectively demonstrate “Nazi Germany’s efforts to incite Arabs against the Jews changed the perception of the Jews within Islamic societies” (270). Their aftereffects for the Arab world did not only pave the way for Islamic opposition against the Jews of Mandatory Palestine in 1948; they still prevail in today’s Middle East as antisemitic rhetoric on both a political and a socio-cultural level.

## Comprehending Shoah and Post-Shoah Antisemitism

The articles in this part of the present volume deal with Shoah and post-Shoah antisemitism in Europe and in the United States. They are based on a larger question of whether the Shoah has to be regarded as a unique historical event or, rather, an event unprecedented with unique foundations. Understanding the Shoah as unprecedented and unique with regards to its totality and universality (Porat), efforts have been made to combat antisemitism and other forms of racism following World War II and its atrocities. While societies that have not been influenced by the experiences of World War II and the Shoah foster antisemitic attitudes in an undaunted continuity, antisemitism has been a taboo after the Nazi era for a long time, especially in societies that had suffered greatly from the crimes of the Nazi regime. In other countries, antisemitism has survived as a form of internalised self-hatred among Jewish communities themselves. This is largely grounded in political instalment of notions of nationality that pressed for the assimilation of religious and cultural diversity into a socio-political majority society (Cohen, Estraikh).

On the flip side of the coin, both history and the contributions in this part of the present volume document that as time passes and as countries and generations of people lose their understanding of the history of the Shoah and a direct connection to it, antisemitism became less of a taboo (Rosenfeld). This cannot only be observed in the United States but also in many countries around the world that have been home to Jews throughout history. Violent antisemitic incidents have significantly increased during the last half of a decade in connection with frustration from political establishments, ruling parties, and social inequity (Fireberg). While, following the Shoah, many efforts have been taken to combat institutionalised antisemitism, for example, in the Catholic Church (Silberstein), its permeability in all parts of society and its overall versatile nature and multiple transformations resulted in an overall atmosphere that is hostile toward Jews in any given part of our societies, regardless of whether or not a society had suffered more or less intensively during World War II.

In the first article of this section, Dina PORAT lays the foundation for further discussions as she asks the question *Is the Holocaust a Unique Historical Event? A Debate between two Pillars of Holocaust Research and its Impact on the Study of Antisemitism*. Porat follows the debate that has been ongoing for the past two decades in research around the world regarding the question of “whether the Holocaust was a unique historical event—meaning, an event possessing unique attributes that are characteristic of it alone—or a genocide that, although ex-



tre, should nonetheless be located on the continuum of genocides that occurred before and after it” (275). To answer this question, Porat examines the views of two of the most prominent Israeli Holocaust researchers, Israel Gutman (1923–2013) and Yehuda Bauer (1926). She takes into consideration Gutman’s and Bauer’s personal family history as Holocaust survivors and Zionist activists. The assertion of the Holocaust’s uniqueness, as proposed by Gutman, is often interconnected with Zionist efforts and served the latter “to reinforce the feeling that a unique Jewish society was being built in Israel in its aftermath, and that the world needed to recognize the terrible injustice” (288) that had been inflicted on European Jewry. Bauer, on the other hand, has argued that the Holocaust is not unique but an unprecedented event with unique foundations. The totality and universality of the Holocaust enterprise, as well as the “absence of rational motivating factors” (285), the amalgamation of racial theory and notions of the nature of the victim that resulted in the industrialisation of murder are components unique to the Holocaust in their combination albeit also appearing separately in other events of mass murder such as in Rwanda and in the Balkans. Concluding, Porat therefore strives to find a synthesis between the two different approaches and argues that there “is no fundamental contradiction between these two” (276). Rather, she calls for an understanding of the Holocaust as an unprecedented event which, however, should not serve to “disrespect or detract from the severity of other murders and atrocities or to exclude them from the discussion” (288). On the contrary, she argues that a “deeper exploration of the histories of other genocides and their outcomes, and their comparison to the Holocaust, can result in empathy for the suffering of the other” (288) and into shared efforts to combat antisemitism and other forms of racism.

In their article, Florette COHEN-ABADY and Daniel KAPLIN focus on Caribbean Jewry as a possible *Model of Tolerance or Assimilation*. While Jews had lived on Caribbean islands since the early sixteenth century, little is commonly known about their communal lives and, especially, about possible antisemitic hatred they face. Cohen and Kaplin, therefore, trace the history of Jewish communities on the islands of Cuba, Haiti, and on the Netherland Antilles, from their first settlements following expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula to the twenty-first century. Many of the Caribbean communities grew and flourished during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A special example is given with the Jewish community of Suriname as the “oldest Jewish community in the Western Hemisphere” (300), where Jews had been granted full religious and economic freedom already during the seventeenth century. Yet, Jewish life today is sparse in Suriname and most of the other places in the Caribbean. The decline had started in the late 1800s, following a large wave of emigration to the United States. As a second factor for the increasing disappearance of Jews

in the Caribbean, immigration from Holocaust refugees is mentioned, who had no intention of establishing Jewish communities but rather gave in to the difficulties surrounding them in their new homes and ceased to maintain a Jewish way of life. Following emigration and assimilation, “classic antisemitism” (313) is largely absent in the Caribbean, a “conglomerate of islands and a multi-cultural society that favors tolerance and acceptance of all regardless of race or religion” (313). Concluding, Cohen and Kaplin, however, call for an investigation of the processes that led to the disappearance of Caribbean Jewry in the first place, which they see grounded in a differentiation “between tolerance/acceptance of difference and tolerance/acceptance of assimilation” (318). Caribbean Jews were largely invited to assimilate, rather than be accepted as different and had thus, subsequently, ceased to exist.

Gennady ESTRAIKH traces *Jewish-Related Scholarship in the Soviet Union, 1953–1967*, based on the example of *Sholem Aleichem and Qumran*. His article reveals how the ideological apparatus of the Soviet Union restricted and deformed Jewish-related academic scholarship following their political strategy of assimilating Jews into their own culture. This practice led to the vast loss of cultural memory with contemporary Jewry in post-Soviet countries and a lack of Jewish self-confidence. The missing access to books especially compounded the fostering of Soviet and post-Soviet Jewish national pride and identity. Additionally, “suppression of cultural memory by applying a straightjacket or an outright ban to works on ethnic history was seen as a way to dispel the rising tide of emigration,” (342) starting in the 1970s and continuing until today. An even more important factor was the “glass ceiling” (342) that faced Jews with regards to their access to education, professional diversity, and social advancement. The examples of Sholem Aleichem and Qumran, however, show that Soviet efforts and oppressive policies against Jews, Judaism, and Jewish-related scholarship was not comprehensively effective. Both subjects were among the little aspects of Jewish cultural identity and memory that managed to survive and formed the basis for a new establishment of Jewish studies in the 1990s. Of course, however, they left and still leave little trace in Russian academia, and many Jewish scholars left Russia and other post-Soviet states to continue their studies elsewhere. This is why, sadly, Russian and post-Soviet Jewish studies “struggle to this day to put down roots through the layers of wasteland left from the Soviet period” (343).

Documenting *Sister Rose Thering’s Battle against Antisemitism*, Alan SILBERSTEIN presents an example of an individual heartfelt desire to combat institutionalised antisemitism that society can still learn from even today. As a member of the Dominican order, Sister Rose Thering (1920–2006) devoted much of her life to the fight against injustice and discrimination against Jews

in the Roman Catholic Church. For her PhD thesis, she had investigated the treatment of minorities in Catholic textbooks with a focus on the Jews, which in 1965 directly impacted the *Declaration of the Second Vatican Council on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions*, more commonly known as *Nostra Aetate*. Sister Rose had spoken of “the importance of mutual respect among the citizens of the American democracy” (354), which was taken up by members of the American Jewish Committee present at Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. While she acknowledged that antisemitism had not been a policy of the church, she pointed out that, rather, the antisemitism of the Roman Catholic Church was rooted in age-old Christian doctrine, teaching and preaching with its blaming of the Jews, pejorative mentioning of the term “Jew,” with its “unjust or inaccurate comparisons of the Jewish religion with Christianity” (355) and its omissions of facts like Jesus Christ’s Jewish ancestry. All of Sister Rose’s examples found their way into *Nostra Aetate*, which now called for a “fraternal encounter” (357) between Christians and Jews. Subsequently, guidelines were issued for the changing of traditional teaching and preaching to rid textbooks of the portrayal of Jews and Israel as inferior to Christianity and, thus, illegitimate. Seeing her theories come into action, after *Nostra Aetate*, Sister Rose started to focus on Holocaust Education and on Education in Jewish-Christian Studies in the USA and Israel. Even today, her calls for the encouragement of dialogue, of academic rigor, and strategic commitment to the learning about antisemitism and unlearning of racist prejudices and judgements remain valid. Most of all, as Silberstein concludes, Sister Rose can serve as an example for courage, as she never lost hers during her long battle against antisemitism.

Alvin H. ROSENFELD investigates *Antisemitism in Today’s America* demonstrating that it has been on the rise, especially during the last thirty years. He recognises that social antisemitism has always been part of the country’s history and that American Jews have continuously been faced with discrimination and exclusion as well as with aggression and physical violence. During the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, American Jews had generally felt accepted and were mostly “fully integrated in virtually all strata of American life” (368). During the second half of the twentieth century, however, “America was entering a new and more threatening era, one marked by the emergence of a reenergized antisemitism together with overt forms of intolerance, bigotry, and hostility directed against others” (368–69). As a result, Jews were starting to feel more vulnerable, and this general disease is fuelled by contemporary attacks against them. A major part of Rosenfeld’s article is therefore devoted to the three main areas of American social and political life where Jews are faced with antisemitic hatred and crimes: (1) general terror attacks that put the Jews at the centre of their attention; (2) anti-Zionism and antisemitism on university campuses; and (3) societal

changes with the rise of White Nationalism, the Alt-Right, and White Supremacy, which gained momentum especially during the Trump era. Concluding, Rosenfeld calls to action in all these three fields, for recognizing antisemitism and developing strategies to monitor its manifestations, sponsoring academic research institutions to study contemporary antisemitism, scrutinizing the use of the internet to spread antisemitism, and protection of Jews by American legislation. All of these measures need to be brought together to avert what is happening to the Jews in America, which is a “newly agitated and more threatening situation” (386) than ever before. These present trends will have a “significant impact on the future of Jews, not only in America but around the world” (386).

In his article, Haim FIREBERG reviews *Antisemitic Perceptions and Jewish Sense of Belonging*. Following the general observation of the rise of antisemitic violence around the globe, but especially also in the European Union, Fireberg draws a comparison of contemporary antisemitism in four EU member states, between two from the west, France and the UK, and between two from the east, Hungary and Latvia. While the comparison between these four states results in a variety of differences, an overall finding is that the level of antisemitism “does not necessarily indicate the state of antisemitic perceptions” (404). In the UK and France, which record the highest number of violent antisemitic incidents, Jewish communities mostly have a strong self-confidence and feel largely “at home” in these countries. The same is true for Hungary and Latvia, albeit from an opposite angle—violent antisemitism is low, however, also Jewish self-perceptions are rather negative. Antisemitic perceptions are also strongly connected to national identity and the level of confidence in civil order. Frustration from political decision-making, ruling, and from social inequality, however, as Fireberg finds out, “are the major factors in adopting harsh perceptions about antisemitism” (404). Jews, in turn, feel especially insecure and abandoned wherever there is no political perspective to ensure their wellbeing in a country. Without a country’s effort to recognise “that Jews are an important component of its society,” levels of trust toward the country’s government drop significantly, as the case of France has shown. The same can be observed in the United States in accordance with Trump presidency. Thus, the bigger picture reveals that antisemitism has significantly worsened in most of the countries all over the world during the last half decade. For the Jews, the “feelings of insecurity led to an increasing disbelief in the future of the community and has weakened the sense belonging to the nation” (400), especially in countries like France and Hungary. But also the examples from the UK and Latvia call to action, to confront and combat antisemitism to ensure secure living for Jews in countries where they have dwelled for centuries and have made themselves a proper home as proper members or European civic society.

## Comprehending Anti-Zionism as a Virulent Form of “New Antisemitism”

Forms of antisemitism that focus on Israel and its politics have already reached mainstream thinking. Anti-Zionism is one of the most eminent and most virulent forms of “New Antisemitism” that emerged in accordance with historical and socio-political changes in a world following both World Wars. Until today, however, its claims and narratives are deeply rooted in age-old perceptions, such as the hostility and greed of Jews. Antisemitic sentiments stay the same, even if they are framed as legitimate criticism against the politics of Israel. The articles in this part of the present volume therefore place a special focus on anti-Zionism and its dangers as a form of antisemitism that is easily adaptable and fits into every part of the political spectrum (Becker). The historical narrative of antisemitism, its versatile nature and motivation, as well as its multiple transformations are traced impressively in this last part of the present volume (Giesel). However, this volume can offer only limited room for studies focusing on this new form of antisemitism. As both anti-Zionism and other forms of “New Antisemitism” are often inextricably connected to modern media, especially to the internet (Markl), contributors to the present series have taken an effort to engage with these new forms more intensively in volume 5, *Confronting Antisemitism in Modern Media, the Legal and Political Worlds*. It is important, however, to understand, that these new forms of antisemitism do not represent a turning point in the history of antisemitism. Rather, they confirm antisemitism’s consistent mutability and adaptability throughout time by attesting to one of its latest transformation.

Matthias J. BECKER engages with *The German Left and Israel*. Based on the general societal assumption that antisemitism is a phenomenon of the political right, Becker scrutinises the reproduction of traditional antisemitic stereotypes and the use of antisemitic metaphors in the German left, often covered as anti-Zionism. He uncovers two “demonizing maneuvers” (411): (1) The general association of Israel with colonialism and imperialism since the late 1960s. Both colonialism and imperialism are despised by the left, and subsequently left-wing European politics have shown a lot of solidarity with the Palestinians as Israel’s oppressed opposite. Anti-Americanism, too, is an important factor, and contributes to the leftist’s claim of Israel being “the bridgehead for the United States into the Arab world and partly interpret American support as the expression of the alleged Jewish global power” (411). (2) The German left has constructed a particular regional narrative of Israel as the “new Nazis” and compares the conflict in the Middle East with the Holocaust. This is both a political and psychological practice as through such “demonizing analogies,

German atrocities are trivialized and identification with the German in-group takes place” (411). The identification of the Mideast conflict with the Holocaust helps Germans to emphasise their own history and sensitivity toward it with the result of feeling morally superior. Both anti-Zionist approaches are clearly antisemitic in a way that J. Améry has called “honourable,”<sup>10</sup> since it opposes general anti-social behaviour such as colonialism and oppression. In his analysis, however, Becker demonstrates how the perceptions of Israel and the Mideast conflict vary in accordance with the socio-political background and motivation of those who reproduce these perceptions. While the motif of colonialism is especially important for the far-left, centre-left milieus, on the other hand, argue for human rights and call for Israel’s secularisation. The varying rhetoric and its general mutability is one of the key factors not only for the popularity of new antisemitism but also for its special position and danger: when antisemitism is framed as legitimate criticism against the politics of Israel, it becomes easily acceptable in all parts of society.

In her article, Linda GIESEL analyses *Comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany in Contemporary German Discourse*. She defines these comparisons as “communicative strategies to express defamation against individuals or groups of people and to generate outrage in the space of public communication” (443). The historical awareness of their recipients is exploited to file updated claims about Israeli politics and societal changes. This conflation of anti-Zionism and Nazi rhetoric in German discourse can be traced back to the beginning of the 1980s and functions in three different ways: (1) to dereference their own Nazi past; (2) to defame the State of Israel as a continuity of Nazi politics; and (3) to relativise Germany’s guilt for the oppression of their victims, who, according to the discourse, now have turned into perpetrators themselves. To uncover these processes, Giesel has undertaken a linguistic corpus study including more than ten thousand emails addressed to the Embassy of Israel in Berlin and the Central Council of Jews in Germany, analysing their verbal antisemitic Nazi comparisons. A subsequent analysis reveals that “analogies between Israel and the German Nazi regime were realized predominantly as utterances without typical comparative connectives” (444). This means that, for example, the Israeli government is addressed with references to Hitler, Goebbels, the Wehrmacht, or the SS, therein focusing on the political agents and establishing a purported continuity between perpetrators of the past and present. Concomitantly, Palestine and Gaza as the targets of Israeli oppression are often connected to images of the Warsaw

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10 J. Améry, “Der ehrbare Antisemitismus,” in *Werke: Aufsätze zur Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, ed. S. Steiner (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2005 [1969]), 131.

Ghetto or Auschwitz. What is especially dangerous about these comparisons, Giesel concludes, is their frequency and nonchalance. Without being challenged, utterances like these will subsequently pass with less frequent notice and habituation will set in.

Florian MARKL addresses *The Depiction of Israel in the Media*, often with catchphrases like “*Israel Threatens to Defend Itself.*” Realizing that “the way Israel is depicted in the media’s reporting exerts a tremendous influence on Europeans’ attitude toward Israel” (465), Markl presents an analysis of Austrian media since 2011 as one example. This analysis shows how the coverage of news concerning Israel and Israeli politics often does not follow classic journalist standards. Rather, they “often draw a picture of Israel that is based on imbalanced and misleading reporting; the selective omission of facts; the application of double standards when judging Israeli behavior compared to that of other countries; and the presentation of their own biased attitudes toward Israel as if they were plain facts” (456–66). This leads to a general de-realisation in the media coverage concerning Israel that forms the foundation for a subsequent demonization of Israel and claims for its political de-legitimization. Attacks against Israel from the side of Palestine are often ignored in the media contributing to an image of Israel as ruthless in its own aggression without any legitimate motivation. Aggression and military action are subsequently claimed to be rooted in Israeli or Jewish “nature” and fuel narratives of the Jews and Israel as a worldwide danger.

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## **Comprehending Antisemitism in Antiquity and Late Antiquity**



## Leonard Rutgers

# Early Christian Anti-Judaism

I would like to start my reflections with a quote from Isaac Asimov. In the first of his *Foundation* novels, this Russian-born American biochemist and science fiction writer has one of his characters remark that “violence is the last refuge of the incompetent.”<sup>1</sup> It is a keen observation—one that, I believe, can be of use when studying the anti-Jewish sentiments that surface frequently in early Christian literature of first few centuries of the Common Era.<sup>2</sup>

Now, of course, it goes without saying that it would be wrong generically to qualify the emergence of the advanced literary culture that accompanies the rise of Christianity and that, in fact, is one of its defining characteristics, as a sign of incompetence. Even so, there is no denying that there is something deeply unsettling about this literature all the same, specifically in the way it deals with others in general, and with Jews and Judaism in particular. Early Christian discussions in this area raise fundamental questions. Such questions do not just concern the rationale for the invectives that emerge over the course of early Christian discussions that deal with Jews and Judaism. They also prompt us to reflect on the larger mechanisms that underlie these debates, as well as on the social ramifications of the rhetoric strategies that characterize early Christian thinking on the Jews.

Before trying to highlight what I believe to be the crucial features in all of this, let me begin by stating that in this paper my thinking on these matters

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1 I. Asimov, *Foundation* (New York: Bantam Dell, 1951), 71, 90, 117.

2 See further e.g. R. R. Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury, 1979); J. G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); R. L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century*, vol. 6 of *The Transformation of the Classical Heritage*, ed. P. Brown (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); G. I. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); C. A. Evans and D. A. Hagner, *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); K. R. Stow, *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); W. Nicholls, *Christian Antisemitism: A History of Hate* (Lanham: J. Aronson, 1993); I. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. B. Harshav and J. Chipman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); L. V. Rutgers, *Making Myths: Jews in Early Christian Identity Formation* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009); D. Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014); R. Chazan, *From Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism: Ancient and Medieval Christian Constructions of Jewish History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); R. S. Kraemer, *The Mediterranean Diaspora in Late Antiquity: What Christianity Cost the Jews* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

has been fueled by a very simple realization: namely that aggression, in either its verbal or physical manifestations, is almost never an expression of strength. Rather, as psychiatrists have pointed out time and again, anger, as well as the acts of aggression that result from it, are typically brought about by two factors that at first blush may seem to be quite alien to it but that, in reality, are at the very core of such emotions, namely, pain and fear.<sup>3</sup>

It is this understanding of human behavior that brings me to the question I would like to address: if anti-Jewish ideas and verbal abuse of the Jews are such a recurrent feature in early Christian literature, what was it that Christian writers were so afraid of and why? What sort of pain did they experience and why did they feel the need to take it out on the Jews? And, last but certainly not least, how did the emotional turmoil in which early Christian writers transparently found themselves, affect Jewish-Christian relations in late antiquity more generally? What were the more structural and long-term effects of their incompetence to move beyond feelings of pain and fear in this particular area?

Before trying to find an answer to these questions, let us not get ahead of ourselves, however, and start at the beginning. If we want to gain a deeper understanding of anti-Jewish sentiments within early Christianity at large, literary sources are our most important guide. When we look at this literature and at the ways in which it deals with Jews and Judaism, one can discern at least the following four salient characteristics.<sup>4</sup>

First of all, ideas that were not all congenial to Jews emerge from the very start, that is, they may already be found in the earliest layers of the New Testament, at which point they become a standard feature in early Christian literature to the extent that they rear their ugly head again and again, all the way down the end of antiquity and beyond.<sup>5</sup> Even when there are large tracts in early Christian literature that do not talk about Jews and Judaism at all, one encounters anti-Jewish sentiments in the writings of many fathers of the early church, that is,

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. e.g. L. Berkowitz, "Pain and Aggression: Some Findings and Implications," *Motivation and Emotion* 17, no. 3 (1993): 277–93.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. e.g. S. G. Wilson, ed., *Separation and Polemic*, vol. 2 of *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity*, ed. P. Richardson and S. G. Wilson (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986); A. L. Williams, *Adversus Judaeos: A Bird's-Eye View of Christian Apologiae Until the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. e.g. A. R. Eckhardt, *Elder and Younger Brothers: The Encounter of Jews and Christians* (New York: Scribner, 1967); S. G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70–170 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995); J. D. Dunn, "The Question of Anti-Semitism in the New Testament Writings of the Period," in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways, A.D. 70 to 135*, ed. J. D. Dunn (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1999), 177–212; T. L. Donaldson, *Jews and Anti-Judaism in the New Testament: Decision Points and Divergent Interpretations* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010).

in the works produced by major as well as by minor figures.<sup>6</sup> Besides and no less importantly, such ideas can surface any time, even when we, as modern readers, feel that the larger context in which such remarks suddenly pop up, does not warrant it all at. In short, in early Christian literature anti-Jewish sentiments are like white noise, that is, a sound that, even when it is scarcely audible, is always there, humming in the background constantly.

Second, from a literary perspective, anti-Jewish ideas come in all shapes and sizes. They appear in virtually all literary genres, from exegetical commentaries and sermons to historiographical works and treatises designed specifically to engage and combat the Jews. Given their pervasiveness it hardly comes as a surprise to note that the phraseologies that were used in these variegated literary contexts run the full gamut too, from occasional and off-hand observations that occur when one least expects them, to systematic reflections and elaborations, as in such cases where early Christian thinkers went through their thinking process in a step-by-step fashion, producing fully-fledged monographic treatments about the Jews and Judaism in the process.

Third, and along similar lines, early Christian anti-Jewish thinking seems to have been spread fairly evenly through the Greco-Roman world in geographical and cultural terms, with such ideas surfacing in Syria, Egypt, or Asia Minor as well as in France or Spain and in virtually all the lands in between, and with the respective sources being composed in a variety of languages including Latin, Greek, and Syriac. Clearly, the ventilation of anti-Jewish ideas on the part of early Christians was far from being reserved to a single cultural group, set of theologians, or one or more specific, clearly delineated geographical areas. Yet, perhaps the most remarkable characteristic of all is the fourth one. As scholars have consistently argued over the last twenty to thirty years, the Jews that appear in the writings of the fathers of the early church are frequently not flesh and blood people at all.

Instead, the Jews we encounter in patristic literature are the direct outcome of the fathers' engagement with the texts of the Bible, meaning the Hebrew Bible as well as the New Testament. As a result of this, the Jews that emerge over the course of this process are not historical personalities but figments of scriptural imagination, which is why they are often appropriately called "hermeneutical

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. e.g. O. Limor and G. G. Stroumsa, eds., *Contra Iudaeos: Ancient and Medieval Polemics between Christians and Jews* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996); H. Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld (1.-11.Jh.)* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1990).

Jews.”<sup>7</sup> It is exactly in contexts where such literary inventions and artificial constructs surface that early Christian thinking on “the Jews” expands most dramatically in terms of the verbal aggression and abuse that gets formulated then and there.

If it is true, then, that much of the evidence at our disposal is textual in nature to the point that crucial passages are primarily the result of exegetical meditations and an extended internal monologue, how do we move beyond the purely textual and hermeneutical toward a deeper understanding of the larger historical mechanisms that were at work here?

Interestingly enough, it is exactly the self-centeredness of our texts that helps us see what is going on, that is, as soon as we attempt historically to contextualize the evidence a bit further. On the most basic of levels, early Christian texts dealing with the Jews are often not about the Jews at all but about Christians in search of their own distinct identity. Having begun its life as an offspring of Judaism and as a Jewish sect that accepted the same writings as sacred, early Christianity was facing a set of major, almost unsurmountable challenges when it came to delineate its self-identity. Clearly etched boundaries became crucially important because it was through them that Christian theologians needed to succeed in highlighting the fact that Christianity was something altogether different and new, rather than just the incarnation of Judaism’s younger, yet still identical twin. As they tried to sever all ties from the Jewish past that had produced them, early Christianity’s theological champions could do little but engage in a considerable amount of negative identity-formation. This meant, rather inevitably, that Judaism ended up at the receiving end of the hostile rhetoric that this process of dissociation, separation, and identity formation entailed and engendered.<sup>8</sup>

The fact that the ideas that surfaced in this process appear to have developed without much reference to actual Jews and Jewish communities is not really surprising either. Religious sects that start out on their own, in the way that early Christianity did, are almost always high-tension religious movements. As such, these movements have a tendency to cut themselves off from society at large. Instead they prefer to focus exclusively on the internal dynamics of the group. In addition to thinking about which social norms to embrace and enforce, this naturally also includes self-centered efforts to arrive at a formulation of the group’s ideology including one’s own identity.<sup>9</sup> In our case, this explains why

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7 J. Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Cf. also A. Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Rutgers, *Making Myths*.

8 Cf. Rutgers, *Making Myths*.

9 Cf. W. S. Bainbridge, *The Sociology of Religious Movements* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

Christianity was so self-referential when it talked about Jewish traditions from which it sought to dissociate itself.

If we are correct in concluding that a significant portion of early Christian thought concerning Jews and Judaism had been produced in response to internal needs and for the purposes of internal consumption only, we still must pose the crucial question of whether these writings had an effect that went beyond the narrow audience for whom they were intended. Did they affect Jewish-Christian intragroup relations at large? And did these early Christian efforts to define their own, distinctive selves vis-à-vis the Jews provide them with the necessary tools to interact competently with their significant Jewish “Other” in real life?

To answer those questions, it is instructive to glance briefly at the infamous sermons known as *Against the Jews* that John Chrysostom delivered in the cathedral of the provincial capital of Syrian Antioch in 386 and 387 C.E.<sup>10</sup> When we look at these eight lengthy sermons using the notion of “violence as a measure of incompetence” with which I began my reflections, we see violence and incompetence manifest themselves at three different yet interrelated levels that are very informative from the larger historical perspective that we are interested in here. First there is incompetence in the aggression and verbal abuse that occurs throughout these discourses—clearly evidence for someone who is utterly and disconcertingly incapable of reigning himself in, an uncompromising bully. There is also incompetence that is practical in nature and that relates to Chrysostom’s inability to fully control Antioch’s early Christian community, that is, a group where some people were not bothered in the least by the cordial and organic relationship they cultivated with the local Jewish community.

Yet, the most disturbing form of incompetence is conceptual or theological in character. It arises out of the discrepancy between John Chrysostom’s core message on the one hand and the reality on the ground on the other. Chrysostom’s core message is that Christianity had replaced Judaism entirely. Yet it was precisely on that score that reality was very different from what Chrysostom was saying: even in the late fourth century C.E., Antioch’s Jewish community was so alive and kicking that many Christians were attracted to it to the extent that they participated in its rituals freely and joyfully. It was precisely this situation that helps explain John Chrysostom’s repetitive insistence on selected passages from the Hebrew Bible. These he adduced in an attempt to show that the Jews had ceased to be the people of the covenant a very long

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. J. Chrysostom, *Eight Homilies Against the Jews / Adversus Judaeos*, vol. 68 of *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1862); P. W. Harkins, *Saint John Chrysostom: Discourses Against Judaizing Christians*, vol. 48 of *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1979). Cf. also Rutgers, *Making Myths*, 19–48.



time ago already, that is, even before the historical emergence of Christianity itself. It was a scenario that was the exact opposite of what most contemporaries of John Chrysostom knew to be the case in Antioch. Even when Chrysostom employs an exegetical strategy that others had used before him, its reiterative nature indicates, therefore, that there is quite a bit of special pleading going on here, almost as if Chrysostom is not merely trying to convince his audience but himself as well.

Whatever the real reasons for John Chrysostom's exegetical exuberance and the violently anti-Jewish conclusions he drew from it all too consistently, it is clear, in any case, that in these sermons we encounter an interesting amalgam of what we have already talked about before, namely (a) the fear of not being able to fully control one's own community in the way that the author of these sermons saw fit; (b) the pain of having to do so on the basis of a theology that preached a reality that did not exist and therefore did not and could not convince the Christian masses; which (c) then leads to all of this getting translated into massive amounts of verbal aggression that one cannot but see as a sign of weakness rather than of strength. Here there is verbal violence of a kind that one can easily qualify as "a final refuge of incompetence."

And yet, it is precisely this that makes John Chrysostom's sermons so very interesting from a historical point of view. What we are witnessing here is what I have already highlighted, namely that as soon as Christianity became a societal force to be reckoned with, over the course of the fourth century C.E., it had to negotiate the shockwaves caused by a reality check that resulted from a thorough discrepancy. This discrepancy consisted of, on the one hand, Christianity's self-centered self-image, which had been developed in almost exclusive reference to the in-group and which posited that Judaism was now a thing of the past. And, on the other hand, the reality of a Jewish outgroup that was doing really well for itself during precisely this period—with Jews building monumental synagogues all over town, fulfilling their civic duties high up the social ladder as they were serving on the city's councils, and participating in the cultural life of their times through attending theaters and hippodromes. From a Christian point of view, such a discrepancy was insufferable in that it called into question core notions within early Christian theology concerning the Jews and Judaism, namely ideas about early Christian supersessionism, in the most serious of fashions.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. T. L. Donaldson, "Supersessionism and Early Christian Self-Definition," *Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting* 3 (2016): 1–32.

When such a view of things helps us to explain why there is so much anger, that is, powerlessness in John Chrysostom's words, it is important to stress all the same that his hot-tempered perorations cannot therefore be taken to have been ineffective or without consequence. Rather, they were volatile and dangerous enough, particularly when we consider that there is strong empirical evidence to suggest that hate speech of the kind that we encounter here can easily transform into a hate spin, that is, into forms of manufactured indignation geared toward the emotional exploitation and manipulation of the masses, for the purpose of propelling them into action.<sup>12</sup>

Not surprisingly and perhaps inevitably, this is exactly what then happened in those very same years, meaning in the late fourth and early fifth century C.E. Both literary and archaeological evidence indicates that during this period, synagogues, that is, actual buildings, came under attack by Christian mobs, often for the purposes of transforming them into churches. While several factors contributed to this process, there can be little doubt that centuries of anti-Jewish sentiments on the part of early Christian theologians created the necessary conditions for such events to take place. Once early Christian thinkers began to identify the synagogue as the very site where Judaism manifested itself in this world, as John Chrysostom did amongst others, it became possible for the verbal anger they had vented for so long to attach itself to concrete and identifiable sites and buildings. Late Roman lawgivers did not like that much, but insofar as the Jewish community that gathered in such places was concerned all bets were now off. They had to suffer the ultimate and violent consequence of the utter incompetence we see reflected in early Christian writings including the sermons of John Chrysostom.

Much more than is possible here could be said about the interrelationship between early Christian theology and the history of Jewish-Christian relations in late antiquity. However, it is time to stop here and pose ourselves the question: Can we really maintain that there exists a direct and causal relationship between the anti-Jewish verbal rhetoric we encounter in much of early Christian literature on the one hand and the deeds of aggression against actual Jewish communities on the other?

I think we can and we must. By concluding that I certainly do not mean to imply that violence was the only way in which Christians related to Jews from the late antique period onwards: our sources indicate that there was considerably more nuance to that relationship than just that. What I want to stress, however,

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. B. J. Bushman, R. D. Ridge, and E. Das, "When God Sanctions Killing: Effect of Scriptural Violence on Aggression," *Psychological Science* 18, no. 3 (2007): 204–7.

is that with the rise of Christianity there occurred a systemic change in how Jews were to be viewed within society at large. With orthodox Christianity becoming the single most important identifier in the identity politics of the period and with the Jews becoming Christianity's primary significant "Other," a set of new conditions were created that, once combined with the anti-Jewish rhetoric that permeates much of early Christian literature, led to a new default position vis-à-vis the Jews. That position was fundamentally different from what had been customary before, during the times of the pagan Roman Empire. This new state of affairs can be summed up by saying that within Christian theological circles, anti-Jewish sentiments now became the new normal. To this should be added that the real problem with such an attitude was not that it was necessarily shared by all theologians equally and all of the time, let alone by the population at large. The problem was that these ideas, and the rhetoric that went with it, could be called upon and put into action at any time in such a fashion that actual acts of intimidation and violence against the Jews seemed nothing but a logical, even an inevitable, step in the unfolding of one's own Christian identity.

All of this is also precisely why I think there is little that is innocuous about anti-Jewish sentiments in early Christian literature. When seen against the larger systemic changes I just mentioned, the fathers of the early church were doing little else than lay the groundwork for letting anti-Jewish notions enter into the capillaries of Christian theology in ways that would profoundly influence and, in fact, spoil Jewish-Christian relations for much of the remainder of European history.

While it is already sad enough that Jewish-Christian relations should have evolved in this way and along these lines, insofar as the Christian side of this relationship was concerned, it is, finally, quite ironic that the main drivers in this process were not strength or newly found self-confidence but fear, pain, and, in fact, and a significant dose of incompetence. In light of the above, I probably do not need to stress that in my view, incompetence does not set either a person, a group, or a literature free.

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Armin Lange

# Jew-Hatred in Antiquity: Cultural, Legal, and Physical Forms of Antisemitic Persecution

Jew-hatred in antiquity and late antiquity has been subject to several studies with varying degrees of scholarly quality and widely differing appreciations of the extent and character of the rejection and persecution of Jews in these periods.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Jew-hatred in antiquity and late antiquity has been surveyed in albeit mostly brief chapters in various overall histories of antisemitism.<sup>2</sup> Although ancient and late ancient Jew-hatred is not in the center of most of antisemitism studies,<sup>3</sup> there is ample scholarly literature engaging with the phe-

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1 The following are just a few examples for studies of high scholarly quality: A. Cuffari, *Judenfeindschaft in Antike und Altem Testament: Terminologische, Historische und Theologische Untersuchungen* (Hamburg: Philo, 2007); J. G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); V. Herholt, *Antisemitismus in der Antike: Kontinuitäten und Brüche eines historischen Phänomens* (Gutenberg: Computus, 2009); B. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); K. L. Noethlichs, *Die Juden im christlichen Imperium Romanum (4.–6. Jahrhundert)* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2001); P. Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); M. Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (AD 135–425)*, trans. H. McKeating (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); C.-P. Thiede and Stingelin, *Die Wurzeln des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in der Antike, im frühen Christentum und im Koran* (Basel: Brunnen-Verlag, 2002); Z. Yavetz, *Judenfeindschaft in der Antike: Die Münchener Vorträge* (München: Beck, 1997).

2 Cf. e.g. D. Berger, *History and Hate: The Dimensions of Anti-Semitism* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997); T. B. Eriksen et al., *Judenhass: Die Geschichte des Antisemitismus von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019); W. Laquer, *The Changing Face of Anti-Semitism: From Ancient Times to the Present Day* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2006); M. Perry and F. M. Schweitzer, *Antisemitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005); L. Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism*, 4 vols. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); H. Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld*, 3 vols. (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1982–1994); R. Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (New York: Pantheon, 1992); R. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010).

3 An indicator of the marginalization of ancient Jew-hatred is the *Handbuch des Antisemitismus*, ed. W. Benz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010) which does not engage with either epoch on a comprehensive level.

nomenon. Scholars differ significantly in the appreciation of ancient Jew-hatred. Some claim that it was at best a marginal phenomenon and that antisemitism did not exist in (late) antiquity.<sup>4</sup> Others argue that Jew-hatred was an important aspect that determined the relationship of both the pagan and Christian worlds with Judaism.<sup>5</sup>

Given these diverse appreciations of and attitudes to ancient Jew-hatred in scholarly literature, it might be appropriate to survey the history of persecution of Judaism in antiquity. Such a survey might be able to provide answers as to whether antisemitism existed in antiquity and how marginal or mainstream it was in ancient societies and cultures. The answer to both questions depends significantly on how antisemitism is defined and how antiquity is delineated. Next to such terminological clarity, a survey of antisemitism in antiquity also has to ask which principal forms of the persecution of Jews existed in this period.

## 1 What is Antisemitism and What is Antiquity?

If the term antisemitism is defined as a description of exclusively modern (racist) Jew-hatred,<sup>6</sup> no antisemitism could have existed in either antiquity or late antiquity. If antisemitism is understood as a hatred, the modern and contemporary expressions of which are just the latest form of an age-old phenomenon, then (late) ancient Jew-hatred could very well have been an expression of antisemitism. If late antiquity ends with the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in 476 C.E. or with the end of the reign of Justinian in 565 C.E., the racial characteristics of Visigothic legislation against the Jews of Spain becomes part of the Middle Ages, and those who define antisemitism as purely racist could argue that an-

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<sup>4</sup> See for instance the article by E. Gruen, “The Blood Libel and the Leper Libel: Ancient Antisemitism?” in the present volume, or B. Bar-Kochva’s *The Image of the Jews in Greek Literature: The Hellenistic Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). Cf. also Isaac, *Invention of Racism*.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. e. g. Yavetz, *Judenfeindschaft*, or Simon, *Verus Israel*.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. e. g. W. Bergmann, *Geschichte des Antisemitismus* (München: C.H. Beck, 2002); C. Guillaumin, *L’idéologie raciste: Genèse et langage actuel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972); J. Heil, “‘Antijudaismus’ und ‘Antisemitismus’: Begriffe als Bedeutungsträger,” *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 6 (1997): 92–114; G. I. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); T. Nipperdey and R. Rürup, “Antisemitismus,” in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972), 129–53.

tisemitism began only in Medieval times.<sup>7</sup> If, however, the Arab conquest of the seventh and eighth centuries C.E. marks the end of late antiquity, the Visigothic antisemitic legislation would be part of late antiquity.

The above examples show that definitions of antisemitism and the delineation of the periods of antiquity and late antiquity impact the question of whether antisemitism existed in either one of these periods significantly. It is therefore important to explain how I delimit antiquity on the one hand, and how I define antisemitism on the other hand.

A common delineation of antiquity is to set its beginnings ca. 800 B.C.E. and its end with the end of the Arab conquest of much of the Roman world in the seventh and eighth centuries C.E.<sup>8</sup> Inside this time window of more ca. 1500 years, it is now common to distinguish between antiquity and late antiquity. The beginning of late antiquity is often identified as the reign of Emperor Diocletian (284–305 C.E.). However, for the history of Judaism, the so-called Constantinian shift in the year 313 C.E. was a much more incisive event. It was in this year, that by way of the edict of Milan, Emperors Constantine (ruled 306–337 C.E.) and Licinius (ruled 308–324 C.E.) paved the way for Christianity to become the state religion of the Roman world in the 380 C.E. In my opinion, the end of late antiquity is marked by the Arab conquest of the Spanish Visigothic kingdom during the years 711–725 C.E. At the latest at this point, the Roman Empire was reduced to a regional power in Eastern Mediterranean with the Frankish and Langobard kingdoms as the only surviving Germanic successor states.

Focusing on antiquity, my present survey addresses thus the ancient period until its end with the reign of Diocletian and the so-called Constantinian shift in 313 C.E. but not late antiquity. There can be no doubt that during this time Jews suffered from various forms of discrimination and persecution and that they were subject to cultural and religious ridicule. Is it appropriate though to describe these ancient expressions of Jew-hatred as antisemitism?

As I have argued above, the answer to this question depends heavily on how antisemitism is defined. However, to the question “What is Antisemitism?” as many answers are given as there were and are researchers asking it. The present article is clearly not the place for an extensive discussion of this issue. However, a few brief remarks are in order.

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<sup>7</sup> See e.g. R. Chazan, *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*; R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

<sup>8</sup> The Arab conquest began 642 C.E. with invasion of the Roman provinces of Palestine and Syria and ended in the year 711–725 C.E.



The word *antisemitism*, derives from the terms Semite and Semitism. Both have been present since the eighteenth century in scholarly literature and were mostly used with regard to linguistic distinctions. Examples include August Ludwig von Schlözer who described in 1781 Hebrews, Arabs, and African Abyssinians as “Semites”<sup>9</sup> and Franz Bopp who distinguished in 1816 between Indo-Germanic and Semitic languages.<sup>10</sup> However, already Christian Lassen and Ernest Renan employ the term “Semite” with clearly racist connotations in 1847<sup>11</sup> and 1857,<sup>12</sup> respectively. In criticism of Renan, the Jewish scholar Moritz Steinschneider introduced already in 1860 the concept of “antisemitic prejudices.”<sup>13</sup>

The term *antisemitism* became prominent by the end of the nineteenth century. Wilhelm Marr<sup>14</sup> is commonly claimed to have been the first to use it in his book *The Victory of Judaism over Germanism: Regarded from a Non-confessional Point of View: Vae Victis!*<sup>15</sup> However, already Moshe Zimmermann has shown that the term antisemitism cannot be found in this book.<sup>16</sup> Marr’s pamphlet is clearly antisemitic in nature but does not use the word. Whoever coined the word antisemitism is beside the point, though.

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9 A. L. Schlözer, “Von den Chaldäern,” *Repertorium fuer biblische und morgenlaendische Literatur* 8 (1781): 161.

10 Cf. F. Bopp, *Ueber das Konjugationssystem der Sanskritsprache in Vergleichung mit jenem der griechischen, lateinischen, persischen und germanischen Sprache* (Frankfurt/Main: Windischmann, 1816).

11 Cf. C. Lassen, *Indische Altertumskunde*, 4 vols. (Bonn: H. B. König, 1847–1861), 1:494–96.

12 Cf. E. Renan, *Études d’histoire religieuse* (Paris: Lévy, 1880).

13 M. Steinschneider, Review of “Zur Charakteristik der semitischen Völker” by Heymann Steinthal, *Hamaskir: Hebräische Bibliographie: Blätter für neuere und ältere Literatur des Judenthums* 3 (1860): 16. The article by Steinthal was published in *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* 1 (1860): 328–45 and reprinted in a collection of Steinthal’s collected essays: *Über Juden und Judentum: Vorträge und Aufsätze*, ed. G. Karpeles (Berlin: Verlag von M. Poppelauer, 1906), 91–104.

14 For W. Marr, see M. Zimmermann, *Wilhelm Marr: The Patriarch of Anti-Semitism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

15 W. Marr, *Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum: Vom nicht confessionellen Standpunkt aus betrachtet: Vae Victis!* (Bern: Rudolph Costenoble, 1879). For examples for this attribution of the word antisemitism, see F. R. Nicosia, *Zionism and Anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 23.

16 Cf. e. g. M. Zimmermann, “Aufkommen und Diskreditierung des Begriffes Antisemitismus,” in *Ideologie—Herrschaftssystem—Wirkung in Europa: Festschrift für Werner Jochmann zum 65. Geburtstag*, vol. 1 of *Das Unrechtsregime: Internationale Forschung über den Nationalsozialismus*, ed. U. Büttner (Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 1986), 63.

More important is how antisemitism should be defined. A popular distinction that is often made in the study of Jew-hatred is to discern religiously motivated Jew-hatred from racist Jew-hatred, the former would need to be classified as anti-Judaism while only the latter would need to be regarded as antisemitism.<sup>17</sup> In this line of argument, all Jew-hatred before the predominance of racist Jew-hatred in the (late) nineteenth century would have to be described as anti-Judaism while all racist Jew-hatred would be antisemitism.

This distinction is problematic for three reasons: (1) That racism and racist antisemitism begins only in the (late) nineteenth century needs to be questioned given the existence of racist or proto-racist forms of Jew-hatred long before this time. (2) While the term antisemitism is clearly modern in origin and in addition a misnomer that distorts an originally linguistic term, it is not unusual in historiography to describe ancient or medieval realities with modern terms. (3) That racist antisemitism is void of religious contents and meaning makes a particular European form of racist radical right-wing Jew-hatred absolute and elevates it to the paradigm of all other forms of antisemitism.

Two examples show how problematic the distinction between religiously motivated anti-Judaism and racist antisemitism is. My first example goes back to the alleged inventor of the term antisemitism, Wilhelm Marr. Marr himself uses the word antisemitism in describing the religiously driven Jew-hatred of the infamous court chaplain Adolf Stoecker and claims in this quote even that modern antisemitism began with Stoecker in the year 1878:

Modern antisemitism exists since the year 1878 when court chaplain Stoecker approached the Jewish question for the first time from his “Christian-social” point of view.<sup>18</sup>

Marr’s description of the religiously motivated Jew-hatred of Stoecker shows that even the supposed inventor of the word antisemitism regarded religious Jew-hatred as much as antisemitism as his own racially driven version of it. The claim that in its *origin* the term antisemitism was reserved for racist Jew-hatred is thus clearly wrong.

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. J. Heil, “‘Antijudaismus’ und ‘Antisemitismus’: Begriffe als Bedeutungsträger,” *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 6 (1997): 105–6.

<sup>18</sup> W. Marr, “Antisemitische Wucht und Verluste,” in *Österreichischer Volksfreund* (1891). Preserved as a fragment in the estate of Marr. Quoted according to Zimmermann, “Aufkommen und Diskreditierung,” 71, and Zimmermann, *Wilhelm Marr*, 112: “Der moderne Antisemitismus besteht seit dem Jahre 1878, als der Hofprediger Stoecker die jüdische Frage zum ersten Mal von seinem ‘christlich-sozialen’ Blickpunkt aus anging.” Translation by the author of this article.

A second example can be found in a passage from a speech that Hitler's deputy, Rudolph Hess, gave on May 14, 1935, for the German-Swedish society in Stockholm. Hess stated:

I myself was until then not an antisemite, but on the contrary defended the Jews based on the usual historical theory against their adversaries and persecutors. The facts of 1918 and later were so eye-catching that I was forced to *convert* to antisemitism, even though inwardly I was rather reluctant to revise my hitherto conviction about the innocence of persecuted Judaism.<sup>19</sup>

In this quote, several points deserve attention. First, Hess views his change of mind toward antisemitism as a movement from one belief system to another. Hess describes this movement from one belief system to another in both rational and religious terms. That he was “forced” to change his perspective mirrors the forceful emotional experience of conversion from one religion to another. It is thus no surprise that Hess refers to his change from philosemite to antisemite as a conversion. When Hess claims that “the facts of 1918 and later” would have changed his mind, this refers only seemingly to a rational analysis of historical events. It was, after all, not Germany's Jews who were responsible for its defeat at the end of World War I, and it was not Germany's Jews that caused the economic and political crisis following this defeat. Hess describes thus a much less rational thought-process. His interpretation of Germany's defeat and the crisis resulting from it was based on age-old prejudices about Judaism, which provided an interpretative grid that allowed Hess to make religious sense out of an existential crisis. Hess' sense that “the facts of 1918 and later were so *eye-catching*” shows furthermore that they captured his thought process emotionally, that they led him from one set of perceptions to a very different set. This is not a process of rational education but rather one of emotional—religious—transformation.

The two examples show that religious and racist antisemitism cannot easily be separated from each other. However, not only can a person like Rudolph Hess, whose antisemitism was clearly racist in character, describe his racist Jew-hatred

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19 R. Hess, “An die Ausländer guten Willens,” in *Reden* (München: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Franz Eher Nachf., 1938), 104: “Ich selbst war bis dahin kein Antisemit, sondern nahm in Gegenteil auf Grund der üblichen Geschichtslehre die Juden gegenüber ihren Widersachern und Verfolgern in Schutz. Die Tatsachen von 1918 und später waren aber so in die Augen springend, daß ich mich zum Antisemitismus *bekehren* mußte, so sehr ich mich auch innerlich dagegen sträubte, meine bisherige Überzeugung von der Unschuld des verfolgten Judentums berichtigen zu müssen.” Translation and emphasis by the author of this article.

in religious terms. Together with Maxine Grossman I have elsewhere argued that antisemitism in itself is a religious phenomenon.<sup>20</sup>

Given the complicated history of how the word antisemitism developed, it can come hardly as a surprise that scholars and activists in the fight against Jew-hatred define the term differently. A quotation by Steven Beller brings the range of definitions to the point:

Antisemitism is a hatred of Jews that has stretched across millennia and across continents; or it is a relatively modern political movement and ideology that arose in Central Europe in the late 19th century and achieved its evil apogee in the Holocaust; or it is the irrational, psychologically pathological version of an ethnocentric and religiocentric anti-Judaism that originated in Christianity's conflict with its Jewish roots—and achieved its evil apogee in the Holocaust; or it is a combination of all of these.<sup>21</sup>

As stated, the present article does not offer room for an extensive discussion on how to define antisemitism. While the term is clearly a misnomer deriving from a linguistic category, it is nevertheless too established to describe any form of Jew-hatred otherwise. In many countries of the world, governments have accepted the so-called working definition of antisemitism proposed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA):

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.<sup>22</sup>

While the IHRA's definition comes out of a political and diplomatic process, scholarly discourse was carefully incorporated and considered when it was phrased.<sup>23</sup> Although the working definition of antisemitism is not legally bind-

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**20** Cf. A. Lange and M. Grossman, "Jews and Judaism between Bedevilment and Source of Salvation: Christianity as a Cause of and Cure against Antisemitism," in *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, vol. 1 of *An End to Antisemitism!*, ed. A. Lange et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 133–64.

**21** S. Beller, *Antisemitism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.

**22** "Working Definition of Antisemitism," International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, issued July 19, 2018, accessed September 7, 2020, [https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/press\\_release\\_document\\_antisemitism.pdf](https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/press_release_document_antisemitism.pdf).

**23** See M. Weitzman, "The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism," and D. Porat, "The Working Definition of Antisemitism: A 2018 Perception," in *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, vol. 1 of *An End to Antisemitism!*, ed. A. Lange et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 463–73 and 475–87.

ing, it provides nevertheless an internationally recognized and accepted common ground on how to define antisemitism and is thus applied in my present survey on antisemitism in antiquity as well.

This is all the more appropriate as the working definition consciously avoids distinctions of racially and religiously motivated Jew-hatred by not even mentioning these terms. For the working definition, all forms of Jew-hatred are antisemitism, be it the religious demonization of Jews since antiquity or their racist discrimination and persecution by the Nazis or any variety of enmity against Jews.<sup>24</sup>

## 2 In Which Ways Were Jews Persecuted?

To better understand the history of the persecution of Jews, it is helpful to understand the different forms of how Jews were persecuted. This is all the more important as such categorizations allow us to better perceive the interconnectedness of devaluating Jewish culture and religion on the one hand and antisemitic pogroms and genocide on the other hand. I distinguish between three principle forms of antisemitic persecution in antiquity: (1) cultural persecution, (2) legal persecution, and (3) physical persecution.

Between each of these forms of persecution large grey zones exist, and they often are deeply intertwined. An example for such a grey zone would be the banishment of a Jewish population from a country or city as it involves both physical violence and legislative as well as judicial acts. Furthermore, the above forms of persecution are not privy to antisemitism but can be observed with the discrimination and persecution of other minorities and groups as well. While the concepts of physical and legal persecution do not need much explanation, the concept of cultural persecution is rarely used in the study of antisemitism.

1. In the history of antisemitism, physical persecution involved and involves all acts of physical violence against Jewish individuals, groups, institutions, or items owned by such persons or entities. Such acts of violence include physical attacks on Jewish individuals, the burning of a synagogue or the looting of a Jewish shop. The Nazi concentration camps represent of course the sad climax of the physical persecution of Jews.

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<sup>24</sup> For my own view on the religious character of all forms of antisemitism, see Lange and Grossman, "Jews and Judaism between Bedevilment and Source of Salvation"; A. Lange and M. Grossman, "The Religious Nature of Antisemitism: The Examples of the Pittsburgh and Poway Shooters," in *Europäische Werte, Rechtsstaat, Sicherheit* (forthcoming).

2. Antisemitic legal persecution uses both legislative and judicial means to target Jews and discriminate against making Jewish life either impossible or very difficult. One of the most notorious examples of the legal persecution of Jews are the so-called Nuremberg Race Laws of the Nazis. For the period under investigation in this essay, Christians had neither legislative nor judiciary powers. The legal persecution of Jews was thus restricted in antiquity to pagan Jew-hatred. While I will demonstrate below that legal persecutions of Jews happened in the pagan antiquity, sources documenting such incidents are rare and much of this part of the persecution history of Judaism is lost in the mists of time.
3. While the concepts of physical and legal persecution are easy to comprehend, the term cultural persecution can be understood as any form of non-violent and non-legal/judicial discrimination against Jews targeting their cultural heritage and/or cultural identity.

The concept of cultural persecution is not a common one and is rarely used. To my knowledge the earliest attestation is in an article by Grunfeld who uses the term “cultural persecution” to describe the eradication of the German intelligentsia during the Nazi period.<sup>25</sup> Connected to the idea of cultural persecution but more common is the concept of cultural genocide. Although not using the term cultural genocide, Raphael Lemkin included this concept even in his definition of genocide:

By “genocide” we mean the destruction of a nation or an ethnic group ... Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> F. V. Grunfeld, “Cultural Persecution: The First Step Towards Genocide,” *The UNESCO Courier: A Window Open on the World* 38 (1985): 6–7.

<sup>26</sup> R. Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Division of International Law, 1944), 79, emphasis by the author of this article. For Lemkin and the coining of the term “genocide,” see e.g. J. B. Quigley, *The Genocide Convention: An International Law Analysis* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006).

As the cultural aspect of genocide was already seen by the creator of the term “genocide,” cultural genocide<sup>27</sup> was an integral part of the first drafts of the United Nations genocide convention. In these drafts, the concept of cultural genocide referred to acts of forced assimilation or “acts intended to destroy the language, religion or culture of a national, racial or religious group.”<sup>28</sup> However, the term “cultural genocide” was omitted in the 1948 genocide convention of the United Nations itself.<sup>29</sup>

The history of the terms cultural genocide and cultural persecution shows thus already: The concept of cultural genocide pertains to acts of discrimination, to acts of law and law enforcement, as well as to acts of physical violence. Cultural persecution on the other hand describes acts against the intangible cultural heritage of a people, group, culture or religion.<sup>30</sup> Antisemitic cultural persecution includes thus all forms of agitation against and discrimination of Jews that are not necessarily connected with legal, social, and economic measures or physical violence.

The above discussion should not imply that other forms of antisemitic persecution, such as economic or social persecution, did not exist in antiquity as well. Already my brief discussion of the three forms of antisemitic persecution still evident for antiquity shows that to cover the physical, legal, and cultural persecution of Jews in antiquity exceeds what is possible in one brief article. The vastness of this period, the large amount of sources from this period especially for the cultural persecution of Jews, and the different historical events that would need to be addressed render comprehensiveness an impossible goal in one article. I will therefore approach my subject in the present contribution by way of select examples. For this purpose, I will first address the cultural,

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**27** For the concept of cultural genocide, see e.g. E. Novic, *The Concept of Cultural Genocide: An International Law Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) and L. Bilsky and R. Klagsbrun, “The Return of Cultural Genocide?” *European Journal of International Law* 29, no. 2 (2018): 373–96. More recently, the idea of cultural genocide became also a part of contemporary anti-Zionist propaganda and even scholarship. An example for the latter is the book by L. Davidson, *Cultural Genocide* (Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), esp. 65–88.

**28** UN ECOSOC, 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Genocide 5 April to 10 May 1948, Supp. (No. 6), 6; UN Doc. E/794 (1948). Quoted according to Quigley, *Genocide Convention*, 9.

**29** “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,” United Nations, issued December 9, 1948, accessed November 2, 2020, [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.1\\_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.1_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf).

**30** Novic, *The Concept of Cultural Genocide*, 143 and passim. For the idea of cultural persecution, see esp. 142–68.

legal, and physical persecution of Jews in pagan antiquity before engaging with the cultural persecution of Jews by ancient Christians.

### 3 Pagan Jew-Hatred in Antiquity

When studying Jew-hatred in the ancient Mediterranean world, Jew-haters can be clearly divided into two camps, that is, the pagan world and Christianity.

1. The pagan world was shaped by a whole range of polytheistic religions which normally tolerated each other. At least in the case of the Roman Empire, the official state religion has to be distinguished from all other cults. As long as Roman citizens venerated the Roman gods—and during the time of the principate—also the Emperor, they were free to worship as many other deities as they wanted to. This basic polytheistic tolerance did not exclude the ridicule and discrimination of other cultures and religions, though.<sup>31</sup> As Jewish monotheism made the participation in the polytheistic plurality of the Hellenistic world of the Roman Empire difficult, the Jewish belief in one God turned Judaism into a target for such ancient polytheistic contempt. However, pagan Jew-hatred had many causes and any monocausal explanation for it falls short of understanding the pagan enmity against Jews in the ancient Mediterranean world.
2. Christianity, however, was shaped by the same idea of religious exclusivity and election as Judaism. Christian monotheism claimed, though, the God of the Jewish parent religion for itself and declared itself as the new beneficiary of the promises of salvation the God of Judaism made to his chosen people. When Christianity separated from Judaism, the Christian monotheistic claim to the God of Judaism inspired the Christian rejection of Judaism on religious grounds. Early Christians formed thus a religious group identity that constructed the essence of Christian existence as being not Jewish. In other words, Christian group identity was constructed in rejection of Judaism while at the same time appropriating the Jewish idea of the chosen people for Christianity itself.

A further significant difference between pagan and Christian Jew-hatred in the ancient Mediterranean world was that until the Constantinian shift, Christians did not have any state authority, while pagan Jew-hatred could and did express

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. e.g. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism*.



itself during the same time period repeatedly by way of state violence against Jews.

Because of these principal differences between pagan and Christian Jew-hatred, in this essay, I will first discuss pagan Jew-hatred through the Constantinian shift before I will turn to Christian Jew-hatred. Both topics are very big and can thus be discussed only by way of selected examples. For reasons of space, I will also have to restrict my elaborations to the ancient Mediterranean world and cannot engage with any form of ancient Jew-hatred beyond this geographical region.

The conquest of Persian Egypt by Alexander the Great in the late fourth century B.C.E. and the founding of a Hellenistic Ptolemaic kingdom in Egypt in 305 B.C.E. as one of the most important successor states of Alexanders realm mark two important turning points in the history of the ancient Mediterranean world. After these momentous events, the cultural and physical persecution of Jews increased significantly. Ptolemaic Egypt was governed by a small Greco-Macedonian elite, which ruled over a large indigenous Egyptian population. The relationship between Greeks and Egyptians was tense, and even after several generations the Greeks were recognized as foreign conquerors by the indigenous population of Egypt.

To maintain their power and secure tax revenue from Egypt, the Ptolemaic foreign rulers brought various groups of people from other parts of the Eastern Mediterranean into Egypt. They deployed these immigrants as policemen, soldiers, and state officials. Among them, Jews formed a particularly large and visible group. Jews became thus the public face of Ptolemaic state authority and state violence and were therefore appreciated neither by the indigenous population of Egypt nor by its Greco-Macedonian inhabitants. Until the downfall of Ptolemaic Egypt in the year 30 B.C.E., the hatred which should have targeted the Greco-Macedonian ruling class or the Greco-Macedonian government of Egypt was thus directed by both Greeks and Egyptians toward the Jews of Egypt.

With its museum and library—the latter famous even today—Alexandria was the cultural capital of the ancient Mediterranean world. However, Alexandria was also a center of Jew-hatred in the Hellenistic world, and a significant number of Alexandrian scholars were invested in antisemitic polemics. Given the city's cultural importance and recognition, Greco-Egyptian Jew-hatred spread from Alexandria all over the ancient world with ease. The Jew-hatred exported from Ptolemaic Egypt merged with local traditions of Jew-hatred elsewhere in the ancient world making them even more potent.

After Egypt became part of the Roman Empire, the Ptolemaic military and police became defunct. The Jewish elements in the Ptolemaic military seized with them to exist and were thus unable to provide continued protection for

the Jews of the region. While with the demise of the Greco-Macedonian government, the original cause for Greco-Egyptian Jew-hatred did not exist anymore, the lack of protection for the Jews of Egypt allowed for an escalation of antisemitism in Egypt.<sup>32</sup>

### 3.1 Cultural Persecution of Jews in Pagan Antiquity

Having guessed, for the number of those expelled, the same figure as Lysimachus (he says there were 110,000), he offers an amazing and persuasive reason for how, he says, the *sabbaton* got its name. When they had travelled for six days, he says, they contracted swellings in the groin and for this reason rested on the seventh day, after arriving safely in the land that is now called Judea; and they called that day *sabbaton*, preserving the Egyptian language, for the Egyptians call the inflammation of the groin *sabbatōsis*.<sup>33</sup>

This Sabbath polemic was part of the now lost work of the Egypto-Alexandrian writer and scholar Apion. It is preserved as a quotation fragment in Josephus' apology *Against Apion*. That Josephus compares Apion's report about Israel's time in the desert and its arrival in Judea with the one by Lysimachus, demonstrates already that Apion was by far not alone in his antisemitic attitude toward Judaism. Other Greek and Latin authors of whom antisemitic passages are preserved include Agatharchides of Knidos, Apollonius Molon, Chaeremon, Diodorus Siculus, Manetho, Mnaseas, and Plutarch on the Greek side and Ammianus Marcellinus, Cicero, Juvenal, Martial, Petronius, Seneca, and Tacitus on the Latin side.

Apion's Sabbath polemic is not only particularly disgusting but also particularly perfidious. Apion satirizes the Exodus, desert, and conquest narratives and in doing so attacks the Sabbath as a central institution of Jewish religious identity. Different from the biblical narrative, in a distorted caricature, Apion depicts the Jews not as the chosen people but as a group which suffered during its flight from Egypt from a venereal disease. In this way, Apion wants to contest Israel's claim to be the chosen people and thus to disqualify all Jews as human beings, who are especially despicable as proven by their venereal disease. Disease was regarded not only in Judaism but also in other ancient religions as an indicator of impurity. That the Torah contains a whole range of purity legislation demonstrates how important the issue of religious purity was for ancient

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<sup>32</sup> Given the survey character of the following overview, I will not engage in a discussion with scholarly literature.

<sup>33</sup> Translation according to J. M. G. Barclay, *Against Apion: Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 178–79.

Judaism. With his polemic, Apion negates thus not only the key narrative that establishes Jewish religious identity but also the special significance of religious purity in Judaism. Even worse, Apion claims that a venereal disease forced the Jews to rest at the seventh day after the Exodus from Egypt. The Sabbath would thus not memorialize the resting of God after six days of creation but a resting that was forced on Israel by a venereal disease. Apion connects in this way one of the most important religious institutions of (ancient) Judaism with an inflammation of the groin. Thus, Apion negates and ridicules both key Jewish scriptures and a key ritual of the Jewish religion. This exposure to ridicule happens on a scale that both institutions become unacceptable to anyone believing Apion.

Apion's approach is even more perfidious than a modern human being can imagine. A large part of the ancient population could neither read nor write. Even those humans who were able to read and/or write had very limited access to libraries and thus written texts. To verify Apion's claims was thus simply impossible to most ancient audiences. Most of Apion's readers thus would have accepted his slander and would have helped to spread Apion's message of Jew-hatred without questioning it.

If one tries to abstract from Apion's approach theoretically, it becomes evident that with his retelling of the Exodus, desert, and conquest narratives, Apion wants to anchor not only a negative depiction of these key religious Jewish legends but also a negative perception of Judaism in the cultural memory of the Greco-Roman world. As explained above, I characterize this approach as cultural persecution. The intertextual strategy which Apion employs for his cultural persecution of Judaism, that is, the way in which he rewrites Jewish texts, can best be described as counter narrative.

Apion reinterprets the Torah and the Sabbath in a specifically antisemitic way. With the interpretative rewriting of the Exodus, desert, and conquest narratives, Apion creates a new intertext, which he speaks into both the Jewish and Hellenistic culture to anchor them in their respective cultural memories. In the Hellenistic cultural memory, Apion's counter narrative is supposed to create a memory space that evokes hatred and disdain for the Jewish cultural memory and thus for Judaism. In the Jewish cultural memory, Apion wants to change with his counter narrative the desert and Sabbath narratives to such an extent that Judaism would begin to hate itself. This attempt on the cultural persecution and the cultural genocide of Judaism could succeed in antiquity all the more easily as even the Jews themselves had only limited access to written copies of their scriptures. Falsification of Apion's slander was therefore difficult to achieve. With respect to the Jewish cultural memory, Apion's slander can be compared to an aggressive computer virus that can destroy a computer with ease.

The example of Apion has shown that antisemitic cultural persecution employs intertextual strategies to achieve its goal. It wants to shape

1. the perception of another culture or minority in the cultural memory of its own culture in a distinctly negative way,
2. in order to influence the self-perception of this alternate culture or minority in its own cultural in such a negative way that self-rejection becomes unavoidable.

However, in antiquity, cultural persecution was neither restricted to counter narrative, nor did it always derive from Hellenistic scholarship. Discriminating jokes are a further example for the ancient cultural persecution of Jews. Defamation and discriminating interpretations of the Jewish scripture all want to achieve the same goal, that is, the cultural genocide of Judaism. That this strategy was successful is demonstrated by, for example, an Egyptian papyrus from the first century B.C.E. (C.Pap.Jud. I:141):

Herakles to the manager of Ptolemaios many greetings and good wishes of good health. I have asked Iap[...] in Memphis, about the priest of Tebtunis, to write a letter for him, in order that I may know how things stand. I ask you to take care that he does not fall into a trap and take him by the hand; when he will have need of anything, do for him as you do for Artemidoros and, in particular, give me the pleasure of finding the same lodgings for the priest: you know that they *despise* (A. L.) the Jews. Greet [...]ibas, Epimenes and Tryphonas, ... and take care of yourself.<sup>34</sup>

Beyond the effectiveness of the cultural persecution of Jews, this papyrus illustrates also that Jews were discriminated against in Egyptian daily life and had to live in fear of antisemitic acts of violence.

### 3.2 Physical Persecution of Jews in Antiquity

The sources documenting the physical persecution of Jews in antiquity are sparse and often difficult to analyze. In many cases, these sources confine themselves to brief remarks notifying the mass slaughter or banishment of the Jewish population of a given city. Due to the abbreviate nature of these reports, what motivated such acts of violence remains unclear. Were Jews persecuted and even killed, because of their Judaism or, for example, because they instigated

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<sup>34</sup> J. Méléze Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt: From Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian*, trans. R. Coomman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 154–55.

a revolt against the Roman Empire? Did a violent response to the Jewish refusal to venerate other deities go back to a polytheistic lack of understanding or was it motivated by antisemitism? Were individual acts of violence against Jews isolated events that were detached from Jew-hatred or were they motivated by the victimizers' antisemitism? The grey areas between the implied answers to the above questions are of course significant and even more difficult to evaluate given the nature of the ancient sources.

Next to the abbreviated nature of ancient reports about violence against Jews, texts about ancient physical persecution of Jews were often embellished and few details about the historical events can thus still be gained beyond such embellishments. Especially difficult is the source situation for the second and third centuries C.E. Until more sources are discovered and/or identified, it remains simply unknown if physical persecutions of Jews happened in this time period.

The complicated source situation does however not imply that no physical persecution motivated by ancient Jew-hatred happened in antiquity. It only means that in most cases of physical persecution of Jews in antiquity, we simply do not know whether it was motivated by the perpetrators' antisemitism or by other factors.

In view of the difficult source situation, the list of possible physical persecution of Jews in antiquity is more than alarming. This is all the more the case as the below list does not even recognize minor incidents of violence against Jews in antiquity:

- 410 B.C.E., Egypt: Destruction of the Jewish temple on Elephantine—an island in the Nile river in today's southern Egypt
- 331 B.C.E., Babylon: Jews refuse to participate in the rebuilding of the Marduk temple in Babylon ordered by Alexander the Great. Alexander responds with state-organized persecution of Babylonia's Jews. These events might provide the historical context for the Purim Story in the book of Esther.
- 175–164 B.C.E., Jerusalem and Judea: The persecutions connected with the so-called Hellenistic religious reforms of Antiochus IV Epiphanes
- 139 B.C.E., Rome: Banishment of all Jews from Rome by the senate
- 19 C.E., Rome: Banishment of all Jews from Rome by Emperor Tiberius
- 31 C.E., Rome: Persecution of the Jews from Rome by the pretorian prefect of Rome, Sejanus—tolerated by Emperor Tiberius
- Ca. 35 C.E., Babylonia: Pogrom in Seleucia on the Tigris
- 38–41 C.E., Egypt: The Flaccus pogrom in Alexandria (see below for details)
- 49 C.E., Rome: Banishment of all Jews from Rome by Emperor Claudius
- 66–70 C.E., Judea, Syria, and Egypt: Riots and pogroms during the First Jewish War in Ashkelon, Antiochia, Caesarea, Damascus, Gadara, Hippos,

Ptolemais, Scythopolis, Tyrus, and in a group of Syrian cities as well as in Egypt

The arguably best-known physical persecution of Jews in antiquity is the so-called Flaccus pogrom<sup>35</sup> in Alexandria during the years 38–41 C.E. Given that an eyewitness account of the events is preserved, I will discuss the Flaccus pogrom as an example for the physical persecution of Jews in antiquity.

Since Egypt became a part of Roman Empire in the year 30 B.C.E., the influence and importance of the country's Jews declined. With the abrogation of the Ptolemaic army, the Jews of Egypt had no military function anymore. The Jews of Egypt lost thus a key safety factor. It was this loss of protection that made the Flaccus pogrom possible.

Aulus Avilius Flaccus (d. 39 C.E.) was a Roman *equus* who served between 32–38 C.E. as the Roman prefect of Egypt. Flaccus was a confidante of Emperor Tiberius who got into disapproval during the reign of Caligula. Philo describes in his essay *In Flaccum*, how the Greek inhabitants of Alexandria used these circumstances to incite Flaccus against the Jews of the city:

(21) All of them united in developing a plot that was most grievous to the Jewish community. In a private conversation with Flaccus they said: (22) "Gone are the expectations you had of the boy Tiberius Nero; gone too is your next hope, your friend Macro, and what you can expect from the emperor does not look very favorable either. For this reason, we have to find a very powerful intercessor by whom Gaius may be propitiated. (23) That intercessor is the city of Alexandria, which has been honored from the beginning by the entire imperial family, especially by the present master. Intercede it will, if it receives some present from you. And you can give it no greater bonus than by handing over and abandoning the Jews." (Philo, *In Flaccum* 4.21–23)<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The application of a modern term like "pogrom" to a persecution of Jews in antiquity is debated. However, to use modern terms for the study and description of ancient history is unavoidable. Important is not that the word "pogrom" is modern and that it derives from the Russian word *погром* [pɐ'grom] ("mayhem, carnage") which was used to describe the persecution of Jews in the 1880s. Instead, it needs to be asked if a given incident of violence against Jews fits the scholarly definition of a pogrom as outlined, for example, by W. Bergmann, "Pogrom," in *Begriffe, Theorien, Ideologien*, vol. 3 of *Handbuch des Antisemitismus*, ed. W. Benz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 269–70. Cf. *ibid.*, "Pogrome: Eine spezifische Form kollektiver Gewalt," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 50 (1998): 644–65; and W. Bergmann, "Pogrome," in *Internationales Handbuch der Gewaltforschung*, ed. W. Heitmeyer and J. Hagan (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2002), 441–60. In my opinion, the latter is the case with the Alexandrian Flaccus pogrom.

<sup>36</sup> English translations according to Philo, *Philo's Flaccus: The First Pogrom: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, trans. P. W. van der Horst (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 58, 65, 66–67.

When Flaccus ordered that idols of the Emperor should be erected in Alexandria's synagogues, riots arose because the veneration of idols is prohibited in Jewish law, and the veneration of a human as a deity is a grave offense against Jewish religious law (Exod 20:4–5; 22:19; 34:14; Deut 12:30; m Sanh. 7:6; b Sanh. 60b; 61b; cf. Sanh. 60b; 63a). In response to the Jewish riots, Flaccus gave the Jews of Alexandria the legal status of foreigners. As a consequence, those Jews of Alexandria who in part for generations held the status of citizens as well as those Jews who were classified as Hellenes lost important (tax) privileges.

When on his way to Judea the Jewish king Herod Agrippa I made a stopover in Alexandria in 38 C.E., the Greeks of the city slandered him with antisemitic satire. They dressed a well-known madman in doormats and gave him a crown and scepter made of papyrus. Furthermore, they addressed the madman as “marin,” using the Aramaic word for “Lord.” In response to this satire, the incited Greeks of Alexandria stormed the synagogues of the city and erected statutes of the Emperor in them. They plundered Jewish homes and stores, evicted, maltreated, and murdered Jews. Philo describes this pogrom as carefully planned, prepared, and executed:

He himself became everything: accuser, enemy, witness, judge, and executioner. But he then added to the first two (crimes) a third one, namely, he gave permission to those who wanted to plunder the Jews, as at the sacking of a city. (55) Well, what do people do when they get this license? The city has five districts, named after the first letters of the alphabet as we used to write it. Two of the districts are called the Jewish quarters because the majority of the inhabitants are Jews. In the other quarters there are also quite a number of Jews, although scattered about. So, what did they do then? They expelled the Jews from four of the five quarters and drove them together into a very small corner of the one left. (56) Because of their great numbers they (the Jews) flooded the beaches, the dunghills and the tombs, deprived of all their belongings. The enemies, however, ran to the houses left empty and plundered them; they divided the booty among themselves as if it were war. Since no one hindered them, they broke into the workshops of the Jews, even though these were closed because of the mourning for Drusilla, and they brought out all they found there, which was quite a lot. They carried it to the middle of the marketplace, handling other people's property as if it were their own. (57) The unemployment, which was the consequence of this, was an evil that was even more unbearable than the plundering. The financiers had lost their capital and no one was permitted to practice his usual business, neither farmer, nor shipper, nor merchant, nor artisan. So, poverty was brought down on them from two sides: first they were robbed, because in one day they were stripped of all their property and lost all they had, and second they were no longer able to make a living from their regular jobs. (Philo, *In Flaccum*, 8.55–57)

In addition, large parts of Alexandria's population participated spontaneously in the pogrom. Next to all the Jew-hatred that is evident in Philo's report, Philo leaves no doubt that economic factors motivated this ancient pogrom as well:

(69) If the persons who were called to collect brushwood were too slow, they would burn the owners using their own furniture taken from the spoil, thus robbing them first of their most costly articles and then setting on fire anything that was not very useful to serve instead as timber. (70) Many also they bound by one foot at the ankle and dragged them around while still alive, meanwhile leaping on them and crushing them to pieces, thus devising the most cruel form of death. (71) Even when they were dead, the endless fury of their enemies did not come to an end; they inflicted still worse outrages on their dead bodies. They dragged these through—I would almost say—every lane of the city until the corpses had lost their skin, their flesh and muscles because these had been pulverised by the unevenness and toughness of the ground and were totally destroyed because all the constituent parts of the organism had been separated and dispersed in all directions. (Philo, *In Flaccum* 9.69–71)

After these events, Flaccus ordered that the Jews of Alexandria had to live in the city's Delta quadrant. Although the Delta quadrant was a traditional home to many of Alexandria's Jews, they had never before been restricted to it, and many Jews had lived in other parts of the city as well. With his edict Flaccus created thus the first Jewish ghetto in world history. The plundered Jews of Alexandria had to suffer starvation as they were not allowed to work outside the Delta quadrant. Jews who left the Delta quadrant were stoned, slayed, burned, or killed in other ways. Even crucifixions are reported to have occurred in one of Alexandria's arenas. In this situation and in celebration of the Emperor's birthday, Flaccus arranged for a public flogging of the thirty-eight members of Alexandria's Jewish council of elders on August 31, which was a Shabbat. The flogging was so brutal that many of the elders died from it.

In October of the year 38 C.E., Flaccus was deposed by Emperor Caligula. One year later he was executed on the island of Andros. In terms of how far Caligula responded with these measures to a letter from Herod Agrippa remains an open question.<sup>37</sup>

In response to the events described above, the Jewish and Greek inhabitants of Alexandria sent two delegations to Rome to negotiate about the pogrom and the continued persecution of Alexandria's Jews with the Emperor. The negotiations came to a conclusion only during the reign of Emperor Claudius (41–54 C.E.) after Emperor Caligula was murdered on January 24, 41 C.E. In a public letter to the prefect of Egypt, of which at least one copy is preserved today (P.Lond. 1912), Claudius summarizes the results of the negotiations and prohibits his divine worship in Alexandria and elsewhere. The papyrus makes clear that the Emperor would respond to renewed violence in Alexandria with the deployment of

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Philo, *On the Embassy to Gaius. General Indexes*, trans. F. H. Colson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 269–75, 333.



Roman legions, regardless of which party instigated it. The Jews of Alexandria are entitled to the special cooperative rights that they had enjoyed before the Flaccus pogrom. However, they are denied the citizenship of Alexandria for all times. The latter applied also to those Jews who had held Alexandria's citizenship before the Flaccus pogrom—in some cases for many generations. The Jews of Alexandria became thus guests of the city which were protected by the Emperor and had special legal rights. That Jews had lived in Alexandria since the founding of the city, that they represented a large part of its population, and that they contributed greatly to the city's wealth and prosperity all did not matter.

### 3.3 The Legal Persecution of Jews in Pagan Antiquity

The topic of the legal persecution of Jews in antiquity is subject to many problems and is much more difficult to address than it appears. The earliest collections of ancient law that are still preserved today date to late antiquity. From antiquity itself only few reports about laws that concern Jews are preserved and not all of these ancient laws about Jews discriminate against them. If an ancient regulation that discriminates against Jews is preserved, we know often so little about it that it is difficult to determine whether a law that disadvantages Jews is of antisemitic character or not.

Despite these caveats, it can be assumed with a reasonable degree of certainty that already during the early Roman principate, large parts of the Jewish diaspora were confronted with antisemitic regional legislation or antisemitic legal practices. An example of how Roman Emperors responded to this kind of legal persecution and discrimination against Jews in the Greek cities of their realm is the Jewish legislation of Augustus.

Josephus Flavius describes in his historical work, *Jewish Antiquities*, how Herod the Great (73–4 B.C.E.) met with Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa (63–12 B.C.E.) in Ionia in the year 13 B.C.E. Agrippa was a close friend of Augustus and was responsible for the eastern provinces of Rome during the years 23–13 B.C.E. The Ionian Jews seem to have used the opportunity of this meeting to complain about the legal discrimination they experienced from the administration of the Greek cities they lived in. Josephus reports:

But now, when Agrippa and Herod were in Ionia, a great multitude of Jews, who dwelt in their cities, came to them, and laying hold of the opportunity and the liberty now given them, laid before them the injuries which they suffered, while they were not permitted to use their own laws, but were compelled to prosecute their law-suits, by the ill usage of

the judges, upon their holy days, and were deprived of the money they used to lay up at Jerusalem, and were forced into the army, and upon such other offices as obliged them to spend their sacred money; from which burdens they always used to be freed by the Romans, who had still permitted them to live according to their own laws. (Josephus *A.J.* 16.27–28)<sup>38</sup>

The Roman Empire did not only permit its Jews to live according to their own customs but granted them their own jurisdiction as well as to pay the yearly temple tax. The Greek authorities of the Ionian cities denied their Jews exactly these privileges. Beyond that, they forced their Jews to prosecute their lawsuits on Jewish holidays and on Shabbat, that is, on days for which Jewish religious law prohibited such activities. Furthermore, Greek authorities forced them to serve in the army which meant participation in religious rites that Jews considered idolatry. Herod obtained from Agrippa the abolition of these discriminatory legal practices against Ionia's Jews.

What Josephus describes for the year 13 B.C.E. regarding the case of the Ionian cities, he repeats later on for all Jews of Asia Minor and the Cyrenaica in a lengthy excursus, which he inserted into his description of the reign of Herod the Great.

Now the cities ill-treated the Jews in Asia, and all those also of the same nation which lived in Libya, which joins to Cyrene, while the former kings had given them equal privileges with the other citizens; but the Greeks affronted them at this time, and that so far as to take away their sacred money, and to do them mischief on other particular occasions. When therefore they were thus afflicted, and found no end of their barbarous treatment they met with among the Greeks, they sent ambassadors to Caesar on those accounts, who gave them the same privileges as they had before, and sent letters to the same purpose to the governors of the provinces, copies of which I subjoin here, as testimonials of the ancient favourable disposition the Roman emperors had towards us. (Josephus *A.J.* 16.160–161)

The main point of contention between the Jews of Cyrenaica and Asia Minor on the one hand and the authorities of the Greek cities they lived in on the other hand seems to have been the Jewish temple tax. Beyond the obstruction of collecting the temple tax, other forms of legal persecution seem to have taken place as well. Emperor Augustus responded by way of a decree that was valid everywhere in the Roman Empire and that was intended to end all Greek legal persecutions of Jews (see Josephus, *A.J.* 16.162–165). Augustus not only guaranteed the

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<sup>38</sup> English translations of book sixteen of Josephus's *Antiquities* and Josephus' *Jewish War* are according to W. Whiston, *The New Complete Works of Josephus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999).

collection of the temple tax but also put various legal practices directed against Jews under penalty.

Caesar Augustus, high priest and tribune of the people, ordains thus: Since the nation of the Jews hath been found grateful to the Roman people, not only at this time, but in time past also, and chiefly Hyrcanus the high priest, under my father Caesar the emperor, it seemed good to me and my counselors, according to the sentence and oath of the people of Rome, that the Jews have liberty to make use of their own customs, according to the law of their forefathers, as they made use of them under Hyrcanus the high priest of the Almighty God; and that their sacred money be not touched, but be sent to Jerusalem, and that it be committed to the care of the receivers at Jerusalem; and that they be not obliged to go before any judge on the sabbath day, nor on the day of the preparation to it, after the ninth hour. But if any one be caught stealing their holy books, or their sacred money, whether it be out of the synagogue or public school, he shall be deemed a sacrilegious person, and his goods shall be brought into the public treasury of the Romans. And I give order that the testimonial which they have given me, on account of my regard to that piety which I exercise toward all mankind, and out of regard to Caius Marcus Censorinus, together with the present decree, be proposed in that most eminent place which hath been consecrated to me by the community of Asia at Ancyra. And if any one transgress any part of what is above decreed, he shall be severely punished. (Josephus, *A.J.* 16.162–165)

Josephus quotes further decrees of Roman officials implementing the one of Augustus in the various cities and provinces of the Empire (Josephus, *A.J.* 16.166–173). Josephus names specifically Ephesus, Cyrene, and Sardis. These decrees emphasize not only the legality of the temple tax and prohibit its theft but mention also further antisemitic legal practices. According to them, Jews were forced to appear before a judge on Shabbat (Josephus, *A.J.* 16.168), were slandered by informants, and were forced to pay additional illegal duties (Josephus, *A.J.* 16.170). Furthermore, the city of Sardis forbade its Jews to meet and congregate (Josephus, *A.J.* 16.171). The latter had to weigh particularly heavy, as it also made visiting a synagogue impossible. All in all, the various decrees suggest that Greek legal persecution of Jews was sparked by the issue of the temple tax, but with further legal harassments the various Greek cities went far beyond the prohibition of confiscation of the temple tax.

In the various edicts mentioned by Josephus, the Roman authorities—above all the Emperor—appear as guarantors that enabled the Jews to live according to their religion in the face of Greek legal persecution. At the end of his report about protective legislation for Jews by Roman authorities during the reign of Augustus (*A.J.* 16.174–176), Josephus emphasizes that he had included the decrees in question as examples convincing the Greeks of his time to refrain from similar persecution. One can thus assume that the decrees of Augustus and his officials had only a limited impact and that the Greek speaking population of the Roman east

continued to discriminate against Jews by legal and judicial means even until the end of the first century C.E. when Josephus wrote his *Antiquities*.

Josephus' last remark shows thus that the antisemitic legislations of Greek cities were not isolated events in the Roman Empire. Even a law passed by a Roman Emperor can and should be questioned regarding its antisemitic nature. I am referring to the so-called *fiscus Iudaicus*.

The revolt against the Roman Empire during the years 66–70 C.E. is called the First Jewish War. This war counts among the most significant crises of Judaism. Its consequences were more than dramatic. At the end of the First Jewish War, Jerusalem and its Temple were destroyed, the Sanhedrin and the Temple cult ceased to exist, tens of thousands of Jews died during the war or were sold into slavery. Given that up to a third of its Jewish population was killed, the demography of Judea shifted significantly in favor of its non-Jewish inhabitants. Of the large religious Jewish groups, only the Pharisees survived. Under the leadership of Yohanan ben Zakkai, they founded a Rabbinic academy at Yavneh. There they began to lay the foundation for a new Jewish existence and identity that was shaped not so much by the Jerusalem Temple cult but by Jewish religious law, that is, the Halakha. The focus of Jewish life shifted inexorably from Judea to the diaspora.

With the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple, the temple tax came to its end as well. Emperor Vespasian decreed that this tax should now be paid by all Jews to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome:

He also laid a tribute upon the Jews wheresoever they were, and enjoined every one of them to bring two drachmae every year into the Capitol, as they used to pay the same to the temple at Jerusalem. (Josephus, *B.J.* 7.218)

Egyptian papyri show that in comparison to the original temple tax, Vespasian reduced the age from which the tax had to be paid by three years and also included Jewish women and slaves in it. Under these conditions, the two Drachma tax could amount to a huge burden for an average family. For Egypt, tax receipts that survived from antiquity show that the tax for one person was roughly equivalent to the value of five days' wages for a normal worker. This means that a Jewish family had to raise a whole month's income for this special levy that was soon to be known as the "Jewish tax" (*fiscus Iudaicus*).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. E. M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian: A Study in Political Relations* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 371–74.

A mention of the *fiscus Iudaicus* by the church father Origen, who lived in the first half of the third century C.E., shows that this “Jewish tax” existed at least into the third century C.E.:

But you say, How could they who were in captivity pass sentence of death? asserting, I know not on what grounds, that Susanna was the wife of a king, because of the name Joakim. The answer is, that it is no uncommon thing, when great nations become subject, that the king should allow the captives to use their own laws and courts of justice. Now, for instance, that the Romans rule, and the Jews pay the half-shekel to them, how great power by the concession of Cæsar the ethnarch has; so that we, who have had experience of it, know that he differs in little from a true king! (Origen, *Ep. Afr.*, 14)<sup>40</sup>

The *fiscus Iudaicus* introduced by Vespasian points to an important reason for many legal persecutions of Jews, that is, the financial greed of states and rulers as well as the desire for economic and professional advantages over the Jewish population. Vespasian’s law was to find many imitators in medieval and (early) modern times through the Nazi period and had thus a lasting impact on the history of the legal persecution of Jews.

## 4 Christian Jew-Hatred in Antiquity

As argued above, the Jew-hatred among early Christians differed in two ways from the Jew-hatred of ancient pagan religions. On the one hand, the Christian communities of the first three centuries C.E. did not have any state power that would have made legal persecutions or physical persecutions organized by official authorities possible. Early Christians were rather themselves repeatedly victims of persecutions by Romans or even the Roman Empire as a whole. On the other hand, Christianity developed out of Judaism and was thus compelled to construct its own religious group identity in contrast to Judaism. There is hardly a book in the New Testament and hardly an ancient Christian author whose ideas are not shaped by this need for demarcation from Judaism.

The sad reality of this wealth of sources for ancient Christian antisemitism can by no means be dealt with exhaustively in the space of this brief paper. In the following I would like to restrict myself to the discussion of two authors

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<sup>40</sup> Trans. F. Crombie, *Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Part First and Second*, vol. 4 of *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885).

who I believe are representative for the cultural persecution of the Jews by ancient Christians, Paul of Tarsus and the church father Lactantius.

#### 4.1 The Jew-Hatred of Paul of Tarsus as Evident in 1 Thess 2:13–16

The New Testament includes the earliest Christian literature containing passages whose text is antisemitic.<sup>41</sup> Many parts of the New Testament are more than harsh in their polemics against Jews and Judaism. The Gospel of John, for example, describes the Jews as children of the devil: “You are from your father, the devil, and you choose to do your fathers desire”<sup>42</sup> (John 8:44). Luke attacks the Pharisees as money-grubbing: “The Pharisees who were lovers of money heard all this and they ridiculed him” (Luke 16:14). Paul describes his Jewish existence in Phil 3:8 as σκύβαλα—a word designating excrements—and attacks the Jews in 1 Thess 2:15 as not acceptable to God and as “hostile against all human beings.”

The letters that Paul of Tarsus sent to various early Christian communities are among the earliest Christian literature known today. As Paul’s letters contain antisemitic slanders and have an antisemitic reception history, they are the earliest Christian literature that is at least in part antisemitic.

But who was Paul? Concerning Paul’s life, his letter to the Galatians and the book of Acts contain important information. While Acts was written decades after Paul died, Gal 1:10–24 is autobiographical in character. What is known is that Paul was born into a Jewish family in the Cilician metropolis Tarsus. He was a Roman citizen and by occupation a tent maker. Paul was a member of the Pharisaic movement (Phil 3:5; Acts 23:6; 26:5) and a staunch Jew. In Galatians 1, he describes his Jewish past as follows:

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<sup>41</sup> For a more detailed argumentation of the following and a discussion with scholarly literature, see A. Lange, “Intra- und extrajüdische Polemiken: Ein Vergleich von Essenern und Urchristen,” in *The Separation between the Just and the Unjust in Early Judaism and in the Sayings Source/Die Scheidung zwischen Gerechten und Ungerechten in Frühjudentum und Logienquelle*, vol. 1 of *Q in Context*, ed. M. Tiwald (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2015), 61–81; and A. Lange, “Inner- and Extra-Jewish Polemics: The Parting of the Ways Once Again,” in *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls: John Collins at Seventy*, ed. J. Baden, H. Najman, and E. Tigchelaar (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 2:727–46.

<sup>42</sup> English translations of New Testament texts are according to the NRSV unless otherwise noted.

You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. (Gal 1:13–14)

The book of Acts claims that Paul was educated in Jerusalem by Gamaliel:

I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law, being zealous for God, just as all of you are today. I persecuted this Way up to the point of death by binding both men and women and putting them in prison, as the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify about me. From them I also received letters to the brothers in Damascus, and I went there in order to bind those who were there and to bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment. (Acts 22:3–5)

For an unknown period of time after his training, Paul appears to have been charged with the persecution of early Christians. According to his own information, on the way to Damascus, Paul converted to Christianity because of a visionary experience. This conversion event can be dated between the years 31 and 32 C.E. Afterwards, Paul began to missionize the non-Jewish population of Syria. After the apostolic council of 48 C.E., on several long trips, Paul developed active missionary activity mainly in Asia Minor and Greece. Disputes in or conflicts with the Christian communities he founded, Paul tried to solve with the help of letters. Some of these letters (Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philipians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon) are still preserved in the New Testament. Because Paul's letters responded to specific occasions, they do not give a coherent and systematic description of his theology. It is therefore not surprising that Paul articulates his position on Judaism in many different ways emphasizing various facets of his ideas.

The first letter to the Thessalonians is widely regarded as the earliest preserved letter of Paul. Paul founded the Christian community of Thessaloniki most likely in the year 49 C.E. It consisted mainly of gentile Christians. Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians in the year 50 C.E. The letter addresses different questions which the Christians of Thessaloniki asked Paul by way of a letter of their own.

According to the book of Acts, Paul had a conflict with the Jews of Thessaloniki when he founded the Christian community of that city (Acts 17:1–9). Given the sharp polemics against Jews in 1 Thess 2:13–16, it is likely that the report of Acts 17:1–9 goes back to a real conflict between the Christians and Jews of the Thessaloniki. One of the questions of the gentile Christian community of Thessaloniki aimed thus most likely on the significance of Judaism as related to Christianity. This is all the more likely as 1 Thess 2:14 could imply that

the Christians of Thessaloniki perceived the Jewish community of this city as a threat to their preaching of the gospel:

And because of this we thank God constantly, that when you received the word of God by way of preaching from us you accepted it not as a word of humans but as what it truly is, the word of God, which is having an effect in you as believers. 14 Because you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God, that are Judea in Christ Jesus, because you as well suffered from same things from your own compatriots as they did also from the Jews (ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων), 15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets and (who) drove us away, and who are not acceptable to God (καὶ θεῷ μὴ ἀρεσκόντων) and are hostile against all human beings (καὶ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἐναντίων), 16 who denied us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, in order to fill up the measure of their sins constantly. But (God's) wrath came over them repeatedly in the end. (1 Thess 2:13–16)<sup>43</sup>

Paul gives the reason for this terrible polemic against the Jews in v. 16: “who denied us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved.” Paul accuses thus the Jews of Thessaloniki to have denied him the preaching of the Christian gospel in their city. First Thessalonians 2:14 suggests that the Jews of Thessaloniki continued to act against the missionary work of the newly founded Christian community after Paul's departure as well.

Out of this situation, Paul constructs in 1 Thess 2:14–16 a principal antithesis between Jews and Christians, Judaism and Christianity.

First Thessalonians 2:15a claims that the Jews would have murdered Jesus and the Prophets and that they persecuted the Christians of Thessaloniki and other cities. First Thessalonians 2:15a is the earliest preserved reference to the Christian deicide slander. The deicide slander is the false accusation that the Jews would have crucified Jesus of Nazareth who is regarded in Christianity as the son of God. This polemic was to develop a devastating reception history and became one of the main antisemitic accusations, Christianity slandered Judaism with. Only the famous declaration *Nostra Aetate* of the Second Vatican Council officially abolished this slander on October 28, 1965. However, many Christians all over the world are still convinced today that the Jews perceived as a collective would have crucified Jesus.<sup>44</sup> First Thessalonians 2:15b infers

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<sup>43</sup> Translation by the author of this article.

<sup>44</sup> The Anti-Defamation League included the deicide slander in its antisemitism surveys of the US-American population until the year 2016. In the years 2007 through 2016, between 25 and 31 percent of US-Americans claimed that the Jews were responsible for the execution of Jesus, cf. “A Survey about Attitudes towards Jews in America,” Anti-Defamation League, issued October 2016, accessed October 29, 2020, [https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/ADL\\_MS\\_Survey\\_Pres\\_1\\_25\\_17.pdf](https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/ADL_MS_Survey_Pres_1_25_17.pdf), 21. A survey by M. Gottschlich and O. Gruber shows that 8.6 percent of Austria's population similarly holds the Jews responsible for the death of Jesus, cf. M. Gottschlich and O.



from the deicide slander and the slander that the Jews would have killed the prophets and persecute Christians that they “are not acceptable to God (καὶ θεῷ μὴ ἀρεσκόντων, kai theō mē areskontōn) and are hostile against all human beings (καὶ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἐναντίων, kai pasin anthrōpois enantiōn).” Similar to Greco-Egyptian and Roman antisemitism, Paul describes Judaism here as a negative anti-divine force, which would persecute truly religious peoples in their alleged godlessness and misanthropy. While it remains uncertain if Paul knew the writings of pagan antisemites that are extant today, there can be little doubt that during his Hellenistic education Paul came into contact with Greek antisemitic ideas. Whomever Paul might have read, the influence of Greco-Egyptian antisemitism on his argumentation in 1 Thess 2:15 is difficult to deny. Paul employs the topics of pagan antisemites to slander the Jews of Thessaloniki with his Christian addressees. Paul employs thus in 1 Thess 2:15 a Jewish and a pagan tradition that interpret each other in support of his accusation of Jewish deicide. He uses the pagan antisemitic slander of Jewish godlessness to interpret the Jewish tradition of the murder of the prophets to his pagan audience.

In turn, the Greek gentile readers of Paul’s letter had to understand 1 Thess 2:15 in the sense of Greek antisemitic polemics. The slanders of deicide and godlessness had to remind the gentile Christians of Thessaloniki of polemics like Manetho and Apion voiced them. Both authors claimed that Jews would have systematically acted against the religion of Egypt, slaughtering sacred animals of Egypt and destroying its altars. The assertion that the Jews would not please God had to remind the Thessalonians of polemics which connected the Jews with the Greco-Egyptian chaos deity Seth-Typhon. Similarly, the Thessalonians had to associate Paul’s accusation that the Jews would be the enemy of all people with accusations of misanthropy by Greek antisemites.

Not only did Paul employ thus in 1 Thess 2:13–16 a traditional pattern of Greek antisemitic thought, he also had to know which antisemitic associations he was evoking with these traditions in the Greek Christians of Thessaloniki.

When Paul speaks of “the Jews” (τῶν Ἰουδαίων, tōn Ioudaiōn) in 1 Thess 2:14 and contrasts them with the Christians as their persecutors, Paul clearly separates himself and all other Christians from Judaism. The fact that he uses motifs of pagan antisemitism in his polemics against Jews confirms this self-delimitation of Christianity from Judaism and reveals the antisemitic character of the passage. First Thessalonians 2:14–16 does thus not document the conflict of one

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Gruber, *Waldheims Erbe: Antisemitische Einstellungen der österreichischen Bevölkerung: Ergebnisse einer Repräsentativbefragung 2010/2011*, unpublished study, 2011. Results of the Austrian survey are included in M. Gottschlich, *Die grosse Abneigung: Wie Antisemitisch ist Österreich? Kritische Befunde zu einer sozialen Krankheit* (Wien: Czernin, 2012).

Jewish group with another one but attests to the polemics of one religious group against another one with the help of traditional antisemitic stereotypes.

Already in the earliest preserved work of Christian literature, Christian identity is thus constructed by way of an antisemitic dissociation from the Jewish parent religion of Christianity. Paul began a long history of antisemitic constructions of Christian and other (religious) group identities that continues as of today and marks one of basic causes of antisemitism.<sup>45</sup>

## 4.2 The Jew-Hatred of Lactantius

While Paul was arguably the first Christian thinker of whom writings are still preserved, Lactantius' work marks the transition from antiquity to late antiquity. Not only did Lactantius experience the last persecution of Christians by the Roman Empire but also how Constantine the Great made Christianity the preferred religion of the Roman state in 313 C.E.

Lactantius' real name was *Lucius Caecilius Firmanius*. The epithet Lactantius is first attested in the writings of Jerome (*De viris illustribus* 80). Lactantius was born around 250 C.E. in the Roman province of Africa and died around 320 or 325 C.E. in Trier. He was the official rhetorician for Emperor Diocletian in Nicomedia and resigned from this position after his conversion to Christianity on February 24, 303 C.E. shortly before the Diocletian persecution of Christians. Lactantius later became an advisor to Emperor Constantine and the teacher of his son Crispus, with whom he went to Trier in 317 C.E. The main work of Lactantius is the apology *Institutiones Divinae* or in English "Divine Institutions," of which he himself has compiled a summary: *Epitome divinarum institutionum* ("The Epitome of the Divine Institutions"). In the Middle Ages, Lactantius' propagandistic work *De mortibus persecutorum* ("On the Deaths of the Persecutors") was particularly valued. In this book, Lactantius tells the stories of how ten Roman emperors suffered and died.

Like most patristic authors, Lactantius was convinced of the decide slander. A brief remark in *De mortibus persecutorum* 2 shows that for Lactantius the Jewish guilt for the death of Jesus was beyond question:

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45 Cf. A. Lange and K. Mayerhofer, "Introduction," in *Confronting Antisemitism from the Perspectives of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism*, vol. 2 of *An End to Antisemitism!*, ed. A. Lange et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 13–22; and the introduction in the present volume, 1–27.

In the latter days of the Emperor Tiberius, in the consulship of Ruberius Geminus and Fufius Geminus, and on the tenth of the kalends in April, as I find it written, Jesus Christ was crucified by the Jews.<sup>46</sup>

In the *Epitome of the Divine Institutions* (§45), Lactantius can even describe in great detail how the Jews would have killed Jesus because he was hailed as the son of God as would have been foretold in the Wisdom of Solomon 2:12–22. Lactantius claims that not Pilate but the Jewish people and the Jewish authorities captured Jesus and sentenced him to death by crucifixion. Before Jesus' execution, the Jews mocked, beaten, scourged, and tortured Jesus. He further claims that the (Jewish) executioners cast lots over Jesus' tunic and mantle and then crucified him. Lactantius' report in the *Epitome of the Divine Institutions* is clearly a distorted version of the biblical passion narrative that tries to emphasize the alleged Jewish killing of Jesus even more than the New Testament does.

Already the deicide slander suggests that Lactantius was hostile to Judaism. In line with his antisemitism and in extending the idea of deicide in the seventh book of the *Divine Institutions*, Lactantius claims that the Jews would await the coming of the Messiah but in vain, as Jesus would bring salvation to the Christian with his second coming but suffering and punishment for the Jews. Both would correspond to all their sins and account for the holy blood they would have shed when murdering the Jesus.

I will now come to the remaining part of the subject, that an end may be put to the work. But this remains, that we should treat of the judgment of God, which will then be established when our Lord shall return to the earth to render to every one either a reward or punishment, according to his desert. Therefore, as we spoke in the fourth book concerning His first advent, so in this book we will relate His second advent, which the Jews also both confess and hope for; but in vain, since He must return to the confusion of those for whose call He had before come. For they who impiously treated Him with violence in His humiliation, will experience Him in His power as a conqueror; and, God requiting them, they will suffer all those things which they read and do not understand; inasmuch as, being polluted with all sins, and moreover sprinkled with the blood of the Holy One, they were devoted to eternal punishment by that very One on whom they laid wicked hands. But we shall have a separate subject against the Jews, in which we shall convict them of error and guilt. (*Divine Institutions* 7:1.23–25)

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<sup>46</sup> All translations of Lactantius' works are according to A. Cleveland Coxe, *Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, 2 Clement, Early Liturgies*, vol. 7 of *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (New York: Christian Literature, 1886).

Lactantius explains in more details what the offenses of the Jews were and what their punishments look like in his *Epitome of the Divine Institutions*. There, Lactantius describes the history of Judaism as characterized by divine caring for the chosen people and by Jewish rejection of that caring. Similar to Paul, Lactantius uses thus the stereotype of Jewish godlessness to rewrite Jewish history into a history of idolatry and murder of the prophets.

Like pagan antisemites, Lactantius constructs a counter-narrative of the history of Israel. However, in contrast to pagan antisemites, Lactantius' goal is not to destroy the Jewish cultural memory. Like many Christian authors before him, with his counter-narrative, Lactantius wants to appropriate the Jewish cultural memory and turn it into a Christian one. Lactantius does thus not aim at the intertextual destruction of Jewish identity but rather at an intertextual expropriation of the cultural memory by which Jewish cultural identity is constructed.

However, with his history of the Jewish rejection of God, Lactantius wants to achieve even more. He wants to explain to his Christian audience why key passages of the Jewish Holy Scriptures would not foretell salvation for the Jews but would announce Jesus as the Messianic savior of the gentiles. Through Jesus Christ would God have given salvation to the Christians and would have taken it away from the Jews. Christianity would have therefore replaced Judaism in salvation history. This model of thought is called supersessionism or replacement theology and is another classic component of ancient Christian Jew-hatred that unfortunately still shapes the thinking of many Christians up to the present day.

Therefore they served God, being bound by the chains of the law. But they also, by degrees going astray to profane rites, undertook the worship of strange gods, and, leaving the worship of their fathers, sacrificed to senseless images. Therefore God sent to them prophets filled with the Divine Spirit, to upbraid them with their sins and proclaim repentance, to threaten them with the vengeance which would follow, and announce that it would come to pass, if they persisted in the same faults, that He would send another as the bearer of a new law; and having removed the ungrateful people from their inheritance, He would assemble to Himself a more faithful people from foreign nations. But they not only persisted in their course, but even slew the messengers themselves. Therefore He condemned them on account of these deeds: nor did He any longer send messengers to a stubborn people; but He sent His own Son, to call all nations to the favour of God. Nor, however, did He shut them out, impious and ungrateful as they were, from the hope of salvation: but He sent Him to them before all others, that if they should by chance obey, they might not lose that which they had received; but if they should refuse to receive their God, then, the heirs being removed, the Gentiles would come into possession. Therefore the supreme Father ordered Him to descend to the earth, and to put on a human body, that, being subject to the sufferings of the flesh, He might teach virtue and patience not only by words, but also by deeds. Therefore He was born a second time as man, of a virgin, without a father, that, as in His first spiritual birth, being born of God alone, He was made a sacred spirit, so

in His second and fleshly birth, being born of a mother only, He might become holy flesh, that through Him the flesh, which had become subject to sin, might be freed from destruction. (*Epit.* 43)

That God would have rejected the Jews and would have freed the gentiles “from the darkness of this present life and from the chains of demons,” would leave no doubt about the salvific exclusivity of Christianity which would represent the only way to salvation. An example for this antisemitic argument of Lactantius can be found in *Epitome* 49 (cf. also *Epit.* 48).

If therefore the Jews have been rejected by God, as the faith due to the sacred writings shows, and the Gentiles, as we see, brought in, and freed from the darkness of this present life and from the chains of demons, it follows that no other hope is proposed to man, unless he shall follow true religion and true wisdom, which is in Christ, and he who is ignorant of Him is always estranged from the truth and from God.

## 5 Conclusions

My above survey leaves no doubt that Jew-hatred existed antiquity. Whether it was widespread or not does not qualify as an argument to claim that antiquity was free of antisemitism. A low number of antisemitic incidents in a given time period can only imply that Jew-hatred might not have been a mainstream phenomenon but not that it did not exist. Given the incredibly large gap of knowledge all studies of the ancient world suffer from, I would not argue that the source situation for Jew-hatred is any different than for many other phenomena in antiquity. That not much evidence is preserved from antiquity points normally only to the huge amount of ignorance about the ancient world the study of antiquity always suffers from. Furthermore, it must be emphasized that as compared to pagan literature from antiquity, ancient and late ancient Christian literature is an unwelcome treasure trove of Jew-hatred with hardly a Christian author from these periods not polemizing against Jews and Judaism as the parent religion of Christianity.

Whether ancient Jew-hatred qualifies as antisemitism or not is a matter of definition. Those who argue that only racist Jew-hatred is antisemitism will most likely deny the existence of ancient antisemitism.<sup>47</sup> However, as argued above, this narrow definition of antisemitism, misconceives the heterogeneous

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<sup>47</sup> See e.g. Gruen, “The Blood Libel and the Leper Libel: Ancient Antisemitism?,” in the present volume, 79–99.

nature of antisemitism itself which cannot easily be limited to one particular form of hatred and intolerance. For this reason, IHRA's working definition of antisemitism is based on a more inclusive understanding of antisemitism that qualifies all forms of Jew-hatred as antisemitism. If the working definition of antisemitism is applied to ancient pagan and ancient Christian texts, the contents of these texts qualify as much as antisemitism as texts of Christian white supremacists in the US or of Islamic extremists do today.

Despite its temporal remoteness, the study of ancient antisemitism is important for many reasons. I hope to have shown above that these three forms of antisemitic persecution existed already in antiquity. Next to legal persecution via regional legislative and judicial measures, and next to physical persecution in various geographical regions, Jews were target by way of cultural persecution in their culture and religion to destroy or appropriate their cultural memory. Both the destruction and appropriation of the Jewish cultural memory would have resulted in a cultural genocide if successful. While ancient attempts at cultural genocide failed, the system of religious symbols that ancient pagan and Christian antisemites created influences the perception of Jews as of today.

An example is 1 Thess 2:13–16 discussed above. In this text, Paul employed the idea of Jewish godlessness from pagan texts to interpret the crucifixion of Jesus as the latest murder in a long line of the Jewish killings of prophets. This is all the more significant as due to his Jewish education, Paul must have known that crucifixion was a Roman but not a Jewish form of capital punishment and that Romans reserved the death penalty in their provinces for their own jurisdiction.

My example of Lactantius shows how Paul's antisemitic interpretation of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth provided not only an antisemitic interpretation of the death of Jesus but created an antisemitic religious tradition of deicide which serves since antiquity as an interpretative key enabling antisemites ever since to read Jews and Judaism as godless murders of the son of God.

An example for how such ancient Christian texts provided and provide interpretative keys that form preconceptions through which even modern Jews and Judaism are interpreted is the statement of an Austro-German politician from the first half of the twentieth century.

However, the latter made no secret of his attitude toward the Jewish people; if necessary he even grabbed a whip to this adversary of humanity out of the temple of the Lord, who as always regarded religion at that time as a means for business. For this, Christ was of course nailed to the Cross, while today's (political) Party-Christianity demeanes itself to beg for Jew-

ish votes during election and later seeks to negotiate backstairs politics with atheistic Jew parties, namely against (their) own nationhood.<sup>48</sup>

The above quote comes out of Hitler's infamous book *Mein Kampf*. It shows that even Hitler's ideas about Judaism were very much influenced by antisemitic traditions such as the deicide that were created by ancient Christians. While it must remain unclear which ancient source influenced Hitler in his understanding of Jesus' crucifixion as a Jewish murder, it cannot be doubted that Hitler argues not only a (fiscal) world-conspiracy theory but clearly perceives Jews as murders of the son of God.

Next to the impact that ancient antisemitic traditions have on modern antisemitism, there are other ways in which ancient Jew-hatred laid the groundwork for even contemporary antisemitism. For instance, ancient Christianity constructed its own religious group identity in dissociation from its Jewish mother religion. For this purpose, ancient Christians employed pagan traditions of Jew-hatred and developed new antisemitic traditions. The construction of antisemitic group identities by way of Jew-hatred is a pattern that can be observed in almost all forms of antisemitism ever since.

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**48** A. Hitler, *Hitler, Mein Kampf: Eine Kritische Edition*, ed. C. Hartmann, O. Plöckinger, and R. Töppel (München: Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 2016), 1:799: "Freilich machte dieser aus seiner Gesinnung dem jüdischen Volk gegenüber keinen Hehl, griff, wenn nötig, sogar zur Peitsche, um aus dem Tempel des Herrn diesen Widersacher jedes Menschentums zu treiben, der auch damals wie immer in der Religion nur ein Mittel zur geschäftlichen Existenz sah. Dafür wurde dann Christus freilich an das Kreuz geschlagen, während unser heutiges Parteichristentum sich herabwürdigt, bei den Wahlen um jüdische Stimmen zu betteln, und später mit atheistischen Judenparteien politische Schiebungen zu vereinbaren sucht, und zwar gegen das eigene Volkstum." Translation by the author of this article.

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Erich S. Gruen

## The Blood Libel and the Leper Libel: Ancient Antisemitism?

Was there a “Jewish problem” in antiquity?<sup>1</sup> Did Jews make themselves sufficiently offensive to generate resentment, fear, or hostility? Or, regardless of Jewish actions or intentions, were they perceived as distasteful, objectionable, or dangerous? Discussions of antisemitism in the Greco-Roman world are legion, and the bibliography seems to grow monthly. I make no effort to summarize it all, let alone to engage with any of it in detail in the short space available. Nor will I endeavor to construct a definition of “antisemitism” which would inevitably be arbitrary, disputable, and probably unhelpful. One can, of course, always resort to the comfortable evasion of saying what was said of pornography, “I can’t define it but I know it when I see it.” On any reckoning, Jews, at least those in the diaspora, were outside the mainstream, usually marginal, and often separatist. That could get them into trouble on occasion, for they were conspicuous, conspicuously different, and, in the event of turbulent circumstances, vulnerable.

Scholarship on the subject, which began as early as the eighteenth century, featured by luminaries like Johann Gustav Droysen, Theodor Mommsen, Eduard Meyer, and Elias Bickerman, has labored mightily to identify reasons why gentiles might have found Jews to be odious or menacing.<sup>2</sup> The most common reasons postulated by researchers are the social non-conformism of the Jews, their supposed shunning of the majority culture, their isolationism which slid into xenophobia and misanthropy, their monotheism that scorned civic cults, not to mention emperor worship, their peculiar customs like circumcision, dietary laws, and observance of the Sabbath that pagans found especially bizarre and subject to mockery, their religious beliefs that set them apart from the rest of society, their claim to be a chosen people, their proselytism that threatened the coherence and stability of traditional Greco-Roman values, indeed their fundamental ethnocentricity which, as the influential Israeli scholar Victor Tcherikover put it a generation ago, made their very existence a foreign body among other peo-

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1 See A. S. Lindemann, “The Jewish Question,” in *Antisemitism: A History*, ed. A. S. Lindemann and R. S. Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 17–33. W. Schmitthenner, “Kennt die hellenistisch-römische Antike eine Judenfrage?” in *Die Juden als Minderheit in der Geschichte*, ed. B. Martin and E. Schulin (Munich: Dt. Taschenbuch Verlag, 1981), 9–29, questions the applicability of the term to the Jews of classical antiquity.

2 See the excellent study of C. Hoffmann, *Juden und Judentum im Werk deutscher Althistoriker des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Brill: Leiden, 1988).

ples. These have loomed as the principal elements identified by scholars as grounds for the animosity toward Jews that manifests itself in classical literature.<sup>3</sup> Some moderns, however, have questioned the extent of *Judenhass* in the pagan world or sought to balance pro- and anti-Jewish sentiments in the surviving texts.<sup>4</sup>

A brief study cannot possibly profess to resolve the larger problem of whether or how far antisemitism played a role in the perceptions of Jews by Greeks and Romans. It represents only a step in that direction but a not insignificant one. This essay looks at perhaps the two most celebrated or notorious slanders perpetrated by pagans on the Jews and seeks to deconstruct their implications and their reverberations. The first is the so-called blood libel, the allegation that Jews indulged in the practice of sacrificing human victims to their god, even engaging in ritual cannibalism. That accusation, ostensibly initiated in antiquity, proceeded to haunt Jews as a toxic smear throughout much of the Middle Ages and beyond.<sup>5</sup> The second is what one might call the leper libel. It refers to

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**3** The scholarship on this subject is vast and cannot possibly be summarized here. Among the more important contributions in recent decades are R. R. Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury, 1974); J. N. Sevenster, *The Roots of Pagan Anti-Semitism in the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 1975); J. L. Daniel, "Anti-Semitism in the Hellenistic-Roman Period," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (1979): 45–65; N. de Lange, "The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Ancient Evidence and Modern Interpretations," in *Anti-Semitism in Times of Crisis*, ed. S. L. Gilman and S. T. Katz (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 21–37; J. G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); L. H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Z. Yavetz, "Judeophobia in Classical Antiquity: A Different Approach," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 44 (1993): 1–22; P. Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes Toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); B. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 440–91; D. Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: Norton, 2013), 13–47. On Tcherikover, see D. R. Schwartz, "Antisemitism and Other-isms in the Greco-Roman World," in *Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism, and Xenophobia*, ed. R. S. Wistrich (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 1999), 73–75.

**4** See, e. g., Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*; Gager, *Origins of Anti-Semitism*, 39–88; L. H. Feldman, "Pro-Jewish Intimations in Anti-Jewish Remarks Cited in Josephus' *Against Apion*," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 78 (1988): 187–251; Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 84–287; E. S. Gruen, "Was There Judeophobia in Classical Antiquity," in *Constructs of Identity in Hellenistic Judaism: Essays on Early Jewish Literature* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 313–32.

**5** On the subsequent history of the blood libel, see G. I. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 263–81; D. Biale, *Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol between Jews and Christians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 111–17; J. Cohen, "The Blood Libel in Solomon Ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehudah*," in *Jewish Blood: Reality and Metaphor in History, Religion, and Culture*, ed. M. B. Hart (New York: Routledge, 2009), 116–35; Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, 202–7.

the notion that the origins of the nation did not derive from a bold exodus from Egypt by heroic rebels who thwarted the Egyptian oppressors and went on to settle the promised land but from ignominious flight by a bunch of wretched lepers and purveyors of disease who were expelled from Egypt as a scourge and proceeded to ravage and plunder wherever they could. That defamatory story, in various versions, found echoes in a number of narratives by Egyptian, Greek, or Roman writers. To what degree did the mud-slinging exemplified by these two slanders actually stick?<sup>6</sup>

I

The idea that Jews practiced human sacrifice first surfaces in a most unlikely source: the fourth-century B.C.E. Greek philosopher and most famous pupil of Aristotle, Theophrastus. The relevant passage is puzzling and provocative. It comes to us secondhand, from a treatise *On Piety* composed by Theophrastus but transmitted by the Neoplatonist Porphyry more than five centuries later.<sup>7</sup> That is not very reassuring. The quotation, if accurate, has Theophrastus say that the Syrians, of whom Jews were a part, sacrifice live victims. They do not eat them but burn them whole at night, pour honey and wine on them, and quickly destroy them, lest they be seen by day. They fast in the course of it, and, he adds, they were the first to conduct sacrifices both of animals and of themselves, thus evidently of other human beings.<sup>8</sup> How telling a claim was this? The passage is packed with problems.

Theophrastus is evidently not very well informed about Jews. They do not, in fact, eat their sacrificial victims, they don't pour honey on them, they don't burn them at night to avoid being observed, and they don't fast in the performance of the ritual. The reliability of Theophrastus or of the transmission of his text is thus doubtful. And that doubt carries over to the statement about the performance of

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<sup>6</sup> I omit here a third notorious accusation, the so-called “ass libel,” which surfaces in diverse versions as the statue of an ass or the golden head of an ass or a representation of Moses seated on an ass, evidently as an object of worship in the Temple. Not only is the allegation absurd on the face of it, reported only in a few and contradictory stories, but pagans, who themselves made images of their deities, would hardly find this a damaging charge to be levelled against others. On the “ass libel,” see now the treatment, with full bibliography, of B. Bar-Kochva, *The Image of the Jews in Greek Literature: The Hellenistic Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 206–49.

<sup>7</sup> Theophrastus, in Porphyry, *De Abstinencia*, 2.26 = M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974), 1:10–12.

<sup>8</sup> κατήρξαντο γὰρ οὗτοι πρῶτοι τῶν τε λοιπῶν ζῶων καὶ σφῶν αὐτῶν.

human sacrifice. Why should we believe it? To reconstruct Theophrastus' sources requires pure guesswork. But it appears that the philosopher himself was not fully comfortable with the idea that Jews indulged in human sacrifice. For he adds the statement that they did so under compulsion and not because they had any enthusiasm for it.<sup>9</sup> Just what kind of compulsion he might have imagined is beyond conjecture. But by tacking on this form of exculpation, Theophrastus signals clearly enough that he is not delivering an antisemitic tirade. That conclusion is reinforced by the fact that in the immediately preceding sentence, Theophrastus had called the Jews philosophers by race (φιλόσοφοι τὸ γένος, philosophoi to genos). Coming from a philosopher, that is surely high praise. This does not mean that he was an advocate for Jewish ways or an admirer of the nation, as some have claimed.<sup>10</sup> But it does take the whole passage out of the category of antisemitic rants. Theophrastus adds that Jews, philosophers as they are, also converse with each other about the deity, observe the stars at night, and call upon god through prayer. The passage is ethnographic rather than polemical.<sup>11</sup> Reference to human sacrifice may be confusion or an error.<sup>12</sup> On any reckoning, there is no hint that it served as a blood libel that branded Jews in pagan eyes.

In fact, the charge, in that form, does not recur again in our evidence. In a rather different form, indeed a much more dramatic scenario, it resurfaced, at least in our information, more than four hundred years later. The tale is reported by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus in his treatise *Contra Apionem* composed near the end of the first century C.E. That work contains a lengthy defense of Jewish values and accomplishments in response to calumnies (or at least what is represented as calumnies) leveled against them by a variety of Greek and Egyptian writers. A chief target of Josephus' wrath is the learned Homeric scholar, grammarian, and historian Apion, an Alexandrian intellectual steeped in Greek culture, although Josephus seeks to stigmatize him as an Egyptian.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> ἀνάγκη καὶ οὐκ ἐπιθυμία τοῦτο πράξαντες.

<sup>10</sup> So, W. Jaeger, "Greeks and Jews: The First Greek Records of Jewish Religion and Civilization," *Journal of Religion* 18 (1938): 137–43; Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 203–4.

<sup>11</sup> For the fullest and best discussion of the passage, see Bar-Kochva *Image of the Jews*, 22–39, with bibliography. His claim, however, that the allusion to human sacrifice was a major negative statement is not justified.

<sup>12</sup> It has even been suggested that that the idea arose in Theophrastus' mind because he knew the story in Genesis of the would-be sacrifice of Isaac and he extrapolated from there; Jaeger, "Greeks and Jews," 143. That would be a stretch.

<sup>13</sup> On Apion, see the excellent treatment by K. R. Jones, "The Figure of Apion in Josephus' *Contra Apionem*," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 36 (2005): 278–315, with extensive bibliography. Briefer recent discussions by P. W. van der Horst, "Who was Apion?" in *Japheth in the Tents of*

Josephus has a number of quarrels with Apion, laced with caustic and barbed vitriol. The most damaging of Apion's hostile aspersions upon Jews is a revival (at least an ostensible revival) of the blood libel.

This time it comes with a narrative, a rather hair-raising one. The tale involves Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a most notorious figure in Jewish history. As ruler of Syria, Antiochus defiled the sacred Temple in Jerusalem, thereby sparking the rebellion of the Maccabees and engendering the holiday of Hanukkah, celebrated ever thereafter. According to Apion, in Josephus' account, Antiochus entered the Temple and discovered a lamentable fellow languishing on a couch, surrounded by heaps of food, fish, fowl, and meat, which the man gawked at in a daze. Once the king entered, the man fell to his knees before him, extended his right hand, and begged to be set free. Antiochus, sympathetic to his plight, asked what was going on, and why he was being plied with gobs of food. The hapless character, weeping and moaning, then poured out the whole story. He identified himself as a Greek who had been kidnapped by foreigners (presumably Jews) and confined to the Temple in Jerusalem, where he had been fattened up by sumptuous meals for almost a full year. That seemed quite hospitable at first, but then he learned about the insidious plan that lay behind it. It was Jewish practice, he was told, to abduct a Greek on a fixed day annually, stuff him with food lavishly for a full year, and then offer him up as a human sacrifice, have a taste of his innards, and, while engaging in the sacrifice, would utter an oath of hostility to Greeks generally, before they took his remains and tossed them in a pit. A pretty grisly tale. This potential victim greeted king Antiochus with enormous relief, stating that only a few days remained in his year before the sacrifice would take place. He called upon Antiochus with a plea to honor the gods of the Greeks and to deliver him from the wicked plots of the Jews that threatened his very lifeblood.<sup>14</sup>

The tale, as we have it, stops there. Whether Apion concluded it at that point or Josephus chose to cut it off we cannot know. In any case, Antiochus Epiphanes, archvillain in Jewish tradition, comes off as a sympathetic character in this story, and any reader would expect him to rescue the corpulent and pitiful victim. Where did this malicious canard come from, and what ends did it serve? Josephus alleges that Apion was a spokesman for others, but he identifies no

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*Shem: Studies on Jewish Hellenism in Antiquity* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 207–21, and J. Dillery, "Putting Him Back Together Again: Apion Historian, Apion *Grammatikos*," *Classical Philology* 98 (2003): 383–90.

<sup>14</sup> Josephus *C. Ap.* 2.91–96; cf. 2.121. We do not possess the original Greek of Josephus' text here and have to rely on a Latin translation from the sixth century C.E.



sources here.<sup>15</sup> He does, however, postulate a motive for the dramatic narrative. The authors of this fanciful fiction, in his view, were apologists for Antiochus IV. They invented this insidious lie in order to clean up the tradition that Antiochus committed perfidy and sacrilege in entering the Temple because his treasury was empty. In short, it was a cover-up.<sup>16</sup>

That explanation has attracted some strong support among modern scholars: the blood libel was manufactured by supporters of Antiochus IV and the regime of the Seleucid kings that he represented. The charge of temple robbery and unlawful penetration into the holy sanctuary needed to be counteracted. Hence propagandists of the Seleucid monarchy fabricated the fiction of the unfortunate Greek and the dastardly deed by bloodthirsty Jews. In this scenario, the depredations by Antiochus in Judea were fully justified. Instead of the wicked oppressor portrayed by the Jews, he came to rescue innocent Greeks victimized by a murderous society.<sup>17</sup>

The theory, however, leaves much to be desired. How likely is it that a Seleucid propaganda machine was revved up to produce a justification for Antiochus' actions in Judea? The king was indeed vilified by the Jews whose Temple he had polluted and whose traditions he had trampled upon. But an apologia would certainly not have been directed to the Jews. Who else would have taken Antiochus' entrance into the Temple amiss? His Seleucid subjects would hardly have blanched at temple robbery or oppression of Jews. And how many would have been mollified by this wildly implausible tale of a Greek fattened up for a year in preparation for slaughter? The details alone would have caused any self-respecting reader to question the seriousness of this drama. An annual kidnap-

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15 Josephus *C. Ap.* 2.91: *propheta vero aliorum factus est Apion*. Josephus earlier claimed that Posidonius and Apollonius Molon had supplied Apion with material for his calumnies; *C. Ap.* 2.79. But it is not clear that they are responsible for this tale, and the accuracy of Josephus' citation of them here is itself subject to debate. See J. M. G. Barclay, *Flavius Josephus: Against Apion*, vol. 10 of *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, ed. S. Mason (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 211–12; Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, 441–57, 490–91.

16 Josephus *C. Ap.* 2.90: *volentes enim Antiocho praestare et infidelitatem ac sacrilegium eius tegere, quo circa gentem nostram est usus propter egestatem pecuniarum, detrahentes nobis etiam quae in futuro sunt dicenda mentiti sunt*.

17 The classic formulation of this theory is E. Bickerman, "Ritualmord und Eselkult: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte antiker Publizistik," in *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, ed. E. Bickerman (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 238–45. Followed, with variations, by Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, 254–59, 271–79. See also J. Rives, "Human Sacrifice Among Pagans and Christians," *Journal of Roman Studies* 85 (1995): 71. Doubts expressed by Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 412; Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 65; E. S. Gruen, "Greeks and Jews: Mutual Misperceptions in Josephus' *Contra Apionem*," in *Ancient Judaism in its Hellenistic Context*, ed. C. Bakhos (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 47; Barclay, *Flavius Josephus*, 217.

ping on the same day each year? How could they be sure that a convenient Greek would turn up at the appropriate time for the abduction? And if it were intended as exculpation of Antiochus, the story should have had him break into the Temple to save the helpless captive from the fate imposed on him by wicked and bloodthirsty Jews whose evil conspiracy was foiled by the heroic king. That would be a splendid scenario in itself. Instead, the narrative has Antiochus completely unaware of the plight of the victim until he entered the Temple. And, if he did anything about it, the tale, as we have it, does not include the outcome. We doubtless do not have the full story, but in present form it would do little for Antiochus' reputation.<sup>18</sup> Josephus has given us just enough to discredit the story and to discredit Apion in the process.

This tale hardly qualifies as an authentic reflection of ancient antisemitism. Its very absurdity undermines any effectiveness it might have had. Modern scholars have assiduously dissected it, finding a number of different motifs and excavating two separate compositions, one on the kidnapping and fattening of the victim for the kill, the other on a conspiracy to sacrifice a Greek in the Temple as part of Jewish hostility against all Greeks. Just how and when they were combined in a single version is beyond knowing.<sup>19</sup> And further speculation would bear little fruit. The tale that Josephus transmits served the principal purpose of allowing the historian to shoot it full of holes with ease and with vitriol. Indeed he had a field day denouncing Apion for inventing a fanciful tale more akin to dramatic tragedy than to history, internally inconsistent, exaggerated to the point of being preposterous, and exhibiting either complete ignorance of Jewish institutions or contemptible malice in distorting them.<sup>20</sup> Apion is the principal target and the concocted yarn a major stick with which Josephus could beat him. The ingenious deconstructions of the tale by modern scholars overlook or downplay the rhetorical character of Josephus' presentation here as elsewhere in the *Contra Apionem*.<sup>21</sup>

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**18** Josephus himself castigates the tale partly on this ground, pointing out caustically that it fails to acquit Antiochus of sacrilege as its creators planned because it has the king totally surprised upon discovering the captive in the Temple; *C. Ap.* 2.97: *non tamen a sacrilegio privat Antiochum, sicut arbitrati sunt qui haec ad illius gratiam conscripserunt; non enim praesumpsit aliquid tale, ut ad templum accederet, sed sicut aiunt invenit non sperans.*

**19** Bickerman's ingenious reconstruction ("Ritualmord," 225–38) is the indispensable starting point for this view, accepted by most scholars; cf. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 412; Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 62–65; Barclay, *Flavius Josephus*, 217–18. Building upon this, Bar-Kochva produced a more elaborate and overly complex construct, *Image of the Jews*, 263–71.

**20** Josephus *C. Ap.* 2.97–111.

**21** See Gruen, "Greeks and Jews," 31–51. On Josephus' use of rhetoric generally in *Contra Apionem*, see J. W. van Henten and R. Abusch, "The Depiction of the Jews as Typhonians and

That is not to say that Apion invented the tale out of whole cloth or that Josephus manufactured it simply to discredit the Alexandrian scholar. But it is well to remember that we have only a portion of the narrative, the portion that Josephus chose to provide, we lack the context in which it appeared in Apion's work, and we are left to guess what objectives he may have had in retailing it. Personal motivation may well have played a part. Apion, as a prominent Alexandrian intellectual, was chosen as member of a delegation to the Roman emperor Gaius in 40 C.E. to address the recent violence and upheaval among Greeks, Jews, and Egyptians in Alexandria. Jews sent a rival embassy to present their case, and the resultant clash provoked some nasty remarks by Apion, including the charge that Jews failed to pay adequate honors to the emperor.<sup>22</sup> Friction between Jews and Greeks in Alexandria had issued in serious violence in 38 C.E., and Apion had evidently earned a reputation as a prime opponent of Jewish privileges in the city. It is not surprising that he might sponsor slanderous calumnies about his foes.<sup>23</sup> The riots in Alexandria were dramatic and divisive, a logical prod for Apion's acrimony. That is not, however, equivalent to pagan anti-semitism.

What deserves emphasis here is the noteworthy inference that Josephus made about the original authors of the blood libel. As we have seen, he identified the perpetrators as those who sought to stand up for Antiochus and to cover up the perfidy and sacrilege that he inflicted upon Jews for no other reason than that he needed to replenish his treasury.<sup>24</sup> Never mind that this explanation may be fraudulent or mendacious. The fact that Josephus conveyed it is itself revealing. By pinning the blame on Seleucid propagandists endeavoring to justify Antiochus' expropriation of Temple funds, he sets the tale outside the category of antisemitism. Its authors had political motives, to rescue the reputation of the king, not a matter of ingrained prejudice against the nation. Most of Josephus' blasts against Apion concern his alleged errors, distortions, and ignorance,

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Josephus' Strategy of Refutation in *Contra Apionem*," in *Josephus' Contra Apionem: Studies in its Character and Context*, ed. L. H. Feldman and J. R. Levison (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 271–309; S. Mason, "The *Contra Apionem* in Social and Literary Context: An Invitation to Judean Philosophy," in *Josephus' Contra Apionem: Studies in its Character and Context*, ed. L. H. Feldman and J. R. Levison (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 187–228; R. G. Hall, "Josephus' *Contra Apionem* and Historical Inquiry in the Roman Rhetorical Schools," in *Josephus' Contra Apionem: Studies in its Character and Context*, ed. L. H. Feldman and J. R. Levison (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 229–49.

<sup>22</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18.257–259.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Rives, "Human Sacrifice," 71.

<sup>24</sup> Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.90, quoted above, n. 16.

not his prejudice against Jews.<sup>25</sup> This so-called blood libel hardly stands as an exemplar of widespread anti-Judaism.

Was it indeed spread widely at all? We possess only one other instance of this slander. It appears in a very late source and is ascribed to an otherwise unknown author named Damocritus, whose date, nationality, and motivation evade inquiry. We are told only that he was a historian and that he wrote a book “On the Jews.” From that work we are treated to just a single brief excerpt which parallels in small part the so-called blood libel in Apion. According to that quotation, Damocritus claimed that the Jews worship the golden head of an ass (an allegation also found in Apion), and that they hunt down and offer up (as a sacrifice) a foreigner every seven years, shred his flesh piece by piece and thus kill him.<sup>26</sup> There is obvious overlap with Apion’s narrative, but also differences, in that Damocritus has the ritual take place every seven years (an evident allusion to the Jewish sabbatical year) instead of annually, adds some grisly details about the manner of execution, and omits explicit reference to cannibalism. It is perfectly possible, even probable, that both stories derive from a single source, with each author spicing it up with his own lurid particulars. There need not have been two separate and independent traditions.<sup>27</sup>

What merits stress is that this constitutes the extent of our evidence on the “blood libel.” It does not rear its ugly head elsewhere. It makes no appearance even in Tacitus’ long list of hostile comments, even if many of them are ironic.<sup>28</sup> He could have paraded the blood libel as prime exhibit of Jewish villainy or as an object of mockery, as his contemporary Josephus did. But he passes over it in silence. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the slander of Jews capturing, fattening, and sacrificing an innocent gentile had little or no traction in the pagan world. “Antisemitism” would be a misnomer.

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<sup>25</sup> Gruen, “Greeks and Jews,” 45–47. Cf. Jones, “The Figure of Apion,” 305–7.

<sup>26</sup> Suda s.v. Δαμόκριτος = Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 530–31: κατὰ ἑπταετίαν ξένον ἀγρεύοντες προσέφερον καὶ κατὰ λεπτά τὰς σάρκας διέξαινον, καὶ οὕτως ἀνήρουν.

<sup>27</sup> On the Damocritus story, see the cautious and sensible remarks of Barclay, *Flavius Josephus*, 217–18. Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, 259–63, employs Damocritus to fill in gaps in Apion’s version and thus to piece together an original version, an ingenious but ultimately speculative task. The tale of worshipping the head of an ass also comes in different versions but constitutes a separate strand not directly pertinent here.

<sup>28</sup> On Tacitean irony in his treatment of Jews, see E. S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 179–96.

## II

A second comparably gruesome libel appears in a number of sources and seems to have earned greater attention: the identification of Jews with lepers, that is, persons of impure and disgusting characteristics. The earliest reference to that dubious designation comes from Manetho, the learned Egyptian scholar and priest, writing at the beginning of the third century B.C.E., who composed a three-volume work on the history of Egypt in Greek, which included the chronological division into thirty dynasties that remains the standard framework for Egyptian history to this very day. In the course of it, he had reason to remark on Jews who played a part in the ongoing story of the Egyptians.<sup>29</sup> The three volumes, alas, do not survive, but two noteworthy extracts were preserved by Josephus who, as we have seen, was keen to refute slanders against his people. The first, an account of the invasion of Egypt and oppression of its inhabitants by the Hyksos, is largely irrelevant for our purposes. Josephus attempts to find an indirect link to the Jewish experience by concluding the tale with the eventual departure of the invaders (after five centuries!) to Syria where they built the city of Jerusalem.<sup>30</sup> But there is nothing in Manetho's quoted text here that makes explicit reference to Jews.

The second extract from Manetho is a different matter. Josephus maintains that this one comes not from sober Egyptian priestly chronicles but from fictitious concoctions and hearsay delivering untrustworthy tales about Jews.<sup>31</sup> He introduces his summary of the narrative accusing Manetho of wrongly mixing up the Jews with a mob of Egyptian lepers and those with other maladies who were expelled from Egypt.<sup>32</sup> Having impugned the tale in advance, Josephus proceeds to recount it as ascribed to Manetho. In brief, it has the Egyptian king Ameno-

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**29** On Manetho, see the important recent treatments of I. S. Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 84–141, and J. Dillery, *Clio's Other Sons: Berossus and Manetho* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015), *passim*, especially vii–xxxiii, 301–47.

**30** Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.73–90. The reference to Jerusalem may be Josephus' own addition.

**31** Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.228–229. The complex question of where the boundary lies between the authentic text of Manetho and the spurious Ps. Manetho has received much discussion and needs no further treatment here. See the valuable summary of the issue with bibliography by Barclay, *Flavius Josephus*, 335–37. For present purposes no decision is required. See, more recently, the discussions of Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism*, 116–25; Dillery, *Clio's Other Sons*, 201–13. The second extract, whether or not it is genuine Manetho, does show that the leper libel was in circulation.

**32** Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.229: ἀναμίξαι βουλόμενος ἡμῖν πλῆθος Αἰγυπτίων λεπρῶν καὶ ἐπὶ ἄλλοις ἀρρωστήμασιν, ὡς φησι, φυγεῖν ἐκ τῆς Αἰγύπτου καταγνοσθέντων.

phis (an invented character, according to Josephus) express a desire to gain direct vision of the gods and was told that, in order to do so, he would have to purge the land of all lepers and other polluted people. The king proceeded to expel all such persons from Egypt and to herd them into the city of Avaris. The exiles, however, managed to organize themselves, selected a leader, a certain Osarsiph, and joined with shepherd peoples who had earlier been expelled from Egypt and settled in Jerusalem. The combined forces made a joint assault on Egypt, causing the king to gather all the sacred animals and a multitude of Egyptians and flee to Ethiopia. The triumphant invaders punctuated their victory by plundering the land, robbing and pillaging, and even using the very sanctuaries of the gods to roast the sacred animals, an unspeakable sacrilege. They ruled for an unspecified time until driven out by the former king, his son, and the forces that they had assembled.<sup>33</sup> The most noteworthy item in that narrative is the statement that Osarsiph, leader of the lepers and the diseased, having been named for the god Osiris, changed his name to Moses.<sup>34</sup>

So did Manetho then lay the leper libel upon the Jews? It looks bad on the face of it. Manetho has been regarded by many scholars as the arch antisemite, purveyor of the purportedly polluted Jews, banished from the land, only to return under the murderous Moses, who, together with Jerusalemites, ravaged the countryside and wreaked havoc upon Egyptian towns, temples, and divinities.<sup>35</sup>

Yet the matter is not so simple. Manetho's account defies reductive analysis as sheer antisemitism. On closer inspection some serious reservations arise about Manetho's supposed animosity toward Jews. Jews in fact receive no mention in the text of Manetho as cited by Josephus. The lepers and other diseased persons whom he castigates are explicitly referred to as Egyptians. Josephus says simply that Manetho wished to mix the Jews up with that polluted crowd.<sup>36</sup> When king Amenophis expelled lepers and others and sent them to the quarries, Manetho clearly identifies them as Egyptians, some even as Egyptian priests, who were now to be separated out from the rest of the Egyptians.<sup>37</sup> To be

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<sup>33</sup> Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.230–251.

<sup>34</sup> Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.250.

<sup>35</sup> So, e.g., Sevenster, *Roots of Pagan Anti-Semitism*, 186–88; Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 64; C. Aziza, “L'utilisation polémique du récit de l'Exode chez les écrivains alexandrins,” *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.20.1 (1987): 54–55; D. Mendels, “The Polemical Character of Manetho's *Aegyptiaca*,” *Studia Hellenistica* 30 (1990): 103–9; M. Pucci Ben Zeev, “The Reliability of Josephus Flavius: The Case of Hecataeus' and Manetho's Accounts of Jews and Judaism,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 24, no. 2 (1993): 233.

<sup>36</sup> Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.229; quoted above, n. 32.

<sup>37</sup> Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.233: τῶν ἄλλων Αἰγυπτίων εἶεν κεχωρισμένοι.

sure, their ranks were subsequently swelled by inhabitants of Jerusalem who joined in the retaliatory assault on Egypt. But Manetho refrains from calling them Jews and does not indict them as a nation. That would be excessive restraint if he were conducting an antisemitic campaign. The connection between Jews and lepers is made by Josephus and imputed to Manetho but does not appear in the latter's text. The sole link comes in the statement that Osarsiph changed his name to Moses. But that is a weak link indeed. Josephus tacks it on at the end of his quotation of Manetho, heading it with the notation "it is said" (λέγεται).<sup>38</sup> That this is a Josephan insertion is clear enough from the fact that he introduces Osarsiph here as if for the first time. In fact, however, he had already appeared in much the same words in Manetho's own text.<sup>39</sup> It looks very much as if Josephus has fastened the leper libel upon Manetho, so as to have a handy target to shoot down. The motif of expulsion from Egypt of undesirable and contaminated persons had already enjoyed a long history in Egyptian literature, a frequent feature of texts that brand the enemy as sacrilegious and villainous ravagers until ejected by champions of the nation.<sup>40</sup> It was not nurtured in antisemitic soil.

A variant on the narrative ascribed to Manetho appears in a fragment of another Egyptian intellectual fluent in Greek who composed a history of Egypt, Chaeremon, possibly identical with the Stoic philosopher of that name and a tutor of Nero, thus a figure of the early first century C.E.<sup>41</sup> Chaeremon's version overlaps with that of Manetho but includes a number of aberrant details and discrepancies. He has Amenophis swing into action after the goddess Isis appeared to him in a dream and advised him, through a sacred scribe, to rid the country of its impure population, 250,000 of them, which he proceeded to do with an edict of banishment. Leadership of the exiles was taken by two sacred scribes named, interestingly enough, Moses and Joseph, both of whom also had Egyptian names. They subsequently joined forces with another 380,000 persons who had been left by the king at Pelusium on the Egyptian border and forbidden to enter the land. The combined peoples then invaded Egypt and caused Ameno-

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**38** Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.250.

**39** Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.238. Rightly noted by A. J. Droge, "Josephus Between Greeks and Barbarians," in *Josephus' Contra Apionem: Studies in its Character and Context*, ed. L. H. Feldman and J. R. Levison (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 134–36; Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 20.

**40** See J. Yoyotte, "L'Égypte ancienne et les origines de l'antijudaïsme," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 163 (1963): 133–43; D. B. Redford, *Pharaonic King-lists, Annals and Day-books: A Contribution to the Study of the Egyptian Sense of History* (Mississauga: Benben, 1986), 276–83.

**41** See Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 417–18; van der Horst, *Chaeremon*; Barclay, *Flavius Josephus*, 153.

phis to flee to Ethiopia, from which he and his son would later reinvade and restore Egyptian rule.<sup>42</sup> The parallels with Manetho's tale are palpable, although the divergences suggest a somewhat different tradition. Josephus links the two as comparable purveyors of narratives hostile to Jews. Yet even the abbreviated fragment that he chooses to quote, out of context, from a large history of Egypt, contains no explicit mention of Jews. We may be sure that if Chaeremon had mentioned them, Josephus would not have omitted it. Only the names Moses and Joseph hint at a Jewish connection, and both of them sport Egyptian names as well. Even the term "leper" does not surface in the Chaeremon fragment; Josephus has to introduce it in his criticism of Charemon's account.<sup>43</sup> It is hard to escape the conclusion that the selection of this fragment had more to do with Josephus' agenda of knocking over straw men than of any vilification of Jews by the pagan author.

We can turn now to the irrepressible Apion. He too had something to say relevant to this subject. And the surviving remarks reveal once more the insidious selectivity of Josephus who reshapes the message for his own purposes. The quotation he supplies from Apion, once more snatched out of a context that we are not privy to, presents some peculiar and largely inexplicable remarks. Apion ascribes to Moses the institution of open-air prayer houses in each district of his home town Heliopolis, where he erected pillars instead of obelisks, and installed the relief of a boat evidently to serve as a sundial.<sup>44</sup> Just what this means is largely opaque but not obviously hostile. Nevertheless, it caused Josephus to go on a rant. He ripped Apion for a whole range of errors, including the malicious suggestion that Moses carved a graven image, which, of course, no Hebrew would ever do.<sup>45</sup> Probably not. But no pagan would be likely to complain about graven images, since they made them all the time. Josephus has once more distorted the intent of an author whom he wishes to use as a whipping boy. And where is there reference to Jews as lepers? Not in any quoted text of Apion. They appear only in Josephus' commentary on the text where he discusses the date of the Hebrews' exodus from Egypt which, according to him, Apion got wildly wrong.<sup>46</sup> Here Josephus claims that Apion's account refers to an exodus of the lepers, the blind, and the lame under Moses' leadership.<sup>47</sup> One need not infer that the des-

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<sup>42</sup> Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.290–292.

<sup>43</sup> Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.298, 1.302.

<sup>44</sup> Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.10–11. See the notes of Barclay, *Flavius Josephus*, 174–75.

<sup>45</sup> Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.12–14.

<sup>46</sup> Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.13–19.

<sup>47</sup> Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.15: φησι τὸν Μωσῆν ἐξαγαγεῖν τοὺς λεπρῶντας καὶ τυφλοὺς καὶ τὰς βάσεις πεπηρωμένους.



ignation as lepers actually represents Apion's wording or, if it did, that he made anything of it at all. Josephus blasts him for a host of inaccuracies, implausibilities, and fictive inventions. Jews as lepers were not among them. For Apion it was evidently a non-issue.

The leper libel does emerge more blatantly in a fuller and grimmer story ascribed to a certain Lysimachus. We know very little about him. Josephus chooses to provide no details, so we are ignorant of his date and provenance.<sup>48</sup> For our purposes what matters is Lysimachus' connection of Jews with lepers expelled from Egypt which appears more unequivocal and more direct than what we found in Manetho or Apion. Or is it?

Lysimachus' exposition in brief summary, as we read it in Josephus, has the Jewish people, afflicted with leprosy, scabs, and other diseases, seek refuge in the temples, and since many persons contracted these sicknesses, one of the consequences was crop failure in Egypt. The situation prompted the king, named Bocchoris in this version, on advice of the god Ammon, to drive the impure and impious out of the shrines and into the desert and to drown those with scabs and leprosy, thereby to purify the sanctuaries. The latter were duly packed into lead sheets and sunk in the sea, the former left in the desert to die. But they were determined to survive and pleaded with gods to save them. Thus began the long trek under Moses until they reached inhabited territory. On Moses' instructions, they mistreated and abused the people, plundered and burned all the temples and altars they came across, and built their own city of Jerusalem.<sup>49</sup> The account, in this form, is thoroughly hostile and the most graphic association of Jews with lepers and the diseased—not to mention identification with temple robbers and destroyers.

Yet even this tale carries ambiguity. The text does not lend itself as readily as the others to a dissection that separates reproduction of the original from Josephan intrusion. Here Josephus appears to engage in paraphrase rather than direct quotation. He is eager to lump Lysimachus with other writers, namely Chaeremon and Manetho, who spread lies about lepers and those scarred by disease, but he singles out Lysimachus as going beyond them in the incredibility of

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<sup>48</sup> Barclay, *Flavius Josephus*, 159, provides the essentials and the most important bibliography. Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, 307–16, 333–37, makes an extensive case for identifying Lysimachus with a Greek Alexandrian writer of the same name and places him in the later second century B.C.E. The argument for the date is not implausible, but it relies heavily on the presumption that Lysimachus' references to Jewish destruction of temples and altars reflects the actions of the Hasmonians, a highly speculative proposition.

<sup>49</sup> Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.305–311.

his inventions which grow out of deep animosity.<sup>50</sup> Josephus has nicely set the stage—or rather loaded the dice. When he turns to the actual paraphrase of Lysimachus' text, matters are not quite so straightforward.

The Jewish people are indeed identified with those suffering from leprosy, scabs, and other diseases.<sup>51</sup> But the infliction of punishment by king Bocchoris fell upon two separate groups. The first were the impure and impious ones who were driven out of the holy shrines and banished into the wilderness, the others, afflicted with leprosy and scabrous disease, were to be immediately drowned.<sup>52</sup> But, of course, it was the wilderness goers, not the lepers, who went on to Judea, plundered temples, and established Jerusalem. So, were Jews lepers or not? Lysimachus introduced them as such, but his story then separated them from the leprous characters who were plunged into the sea. Either Lysimachus has been quite clumsy in his presentation or Josephus mangled it, whether inadvertently or deliberately. Scholars have detected two separate traditions or two layers of the tale awkwardly fitted together.<sup>53</sup> The two groups of offenders, the impious and the leprous, stemmed from independent sources that were sewn together but whose seams are still showing. Whether Lysimachus or Josephus did the stitching, the confused result would not effectively advance the cause of labeling Jews as lepers.

The remainder of Lysimachus' story has Moses and his followers move resolutely through the wilderness, reach inhabited land, oppress the inhabitants, and destroy the religious shrines. As Josephus himself pointed out in his caustic criticism of Lysimachus, how could people who were in such bad shape manage to cross the desert, conquer the land, found a city, and build a great temple?<sup>54</sup> The criticism is valid, but the story's deficiencies may owe less to Lysimachus' failings than to Josephus' manipulation. And the leper libel carries little weight.

Its staying power, in fact, is rather questionable. A possible allusion to it occurs in the work of Pompeius Trogus, a Roman historian of Gallic extraction writing in Latin in the age of Augustus, an epitome of whose work is preserved by the much later and, to us, rather obscure intellectual Justin. Trogus' lengthy survey

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<sup>50</sup> Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.304.

<sup>51</sup> Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.305: τὸν λαὸν τῶν Ἰουδαίων, λεπρούς ὄντας καὶ ψωρούς καὶ ἄλλα νοσηματὰ τινα ἔχοντας.

<sup>52</sup> Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.306: τὸν θεὸν δ' ἀναρεῖν τὰ ἱερὰ καθάρα ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων ἀνάγκων καὶ δυσσεβῶν, ἐκβαλόντα αὐτούς ἐκ τῶν ἱερῶν εἰς τόπους ἐρήμου, τοὺς δὲ ψωρούς καὶ λεπρούς βυθίσει.

<sup>53</sup> See Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 385–86; Barclay, *Flavius Josephus*, 160; Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, 320–29.

<sup>54</sup> Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.315, 1.318.

of Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman history included a brief excursus on the Jews. His sketch has Jews originate from Damascus, but he has some slight awareness of biblical traditions, among them the Hebrews' sojourn in Egypt in the time of Joseph and Moses, even though he telescopes the generations by having Moses as son of Joseph. In the short narrative excerpted by Justin, Trogus does mention that Egyptians were afflicted with scabs and skin disease, with the result that Moses and others were driven out of Egypt so as to prevent further spread of this plague.<sup>55</sup> Leprosy is not specified here, but scaly skin disease may imply it. More important, this notice does not appear in a text hostile to the Jews, nor is leprosy or its equivalent ascribed to them as some heinous component of their existence. Trogus' account has the afflicted expelled simply to contain the contamination, has Moses lead the exiles to their destination, and explains their subsequent preference for holding themselves apart by memory of the contagion and unwillingness to have a similar cause spoil relations with their neighbors.<sup>56</sup> That is very different from an enduring leper libel.

The issue of Jewish isolationism and its connection with the taint of leprosy appears also in another source, the Greek historian Diodorus of Sicily, writing in the late first century B.C.E. Diodorus narrates the troubling tale of the siege of Jerusalem by the Seleucid king Antiochus VII Sidetes ca. 135 B.C.E.<sup>57</sup> In Diodorus' account, when the besieged were prepared to capitulate, many of the king's friends urged him to take the city by force and utterly wipe out the race of the Jews because they alone of all nations held themselves apart, refusing to mingle with other peoples and regarded all as their enemies. The king's friends proceeded to underscore their point by reminding Antiochus that the ancestors of the Jews had been driven out of Egypt as men who were impious and hated by the gods.<sup>58</sup> And they noted further that the expulsion targeted those who had white or leprous marks on their bodies, thus forced across the border as polluted persons, so as to purge the nation.<sup>59</sup> The advisers of the king evidently drew upon hostile reports about the Jews and included a number of other vicious ru-

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55 Justin, 36.2.12: *Sed Aegyptii, cum scabiem et vitiliginem paterentur, responso moniti eum cum aegris, ne pestis ad plures serperet, terminis Aegypti pellunt.* On Trogus' excursus on the Jews, see J. G. Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 48–56.

56 Justin, 36.2.15: *et quoniam metu contagionis pulsos se ab Aegypto meminerant, ne eadem causa inveni apud incolas forent, caverunt, ne cum peregrinis conviverent.*

57 On the siege, see most recently K. Atkinson, *A History of the Hasmonean State: Josephus and Beyond* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 55–59.

58 Diodorus Siculus, 34/5.1.1: *μόνους γὰρ ἀπάντων ἐθνῶν ἀκοινωνήτους εἶναι τῆς πρὸς ἄλλο ἔθνος ἐπιμιξίας καὶ πολεμίους ὑπολαμβάνειν πάντας.*

59 Diodorus Siculus, 34/5.1.2: *τοὺς γὰρ ἀλφροὺς ἢ λέπρας ἔχοντας ἐν τοῖς σώμασι, καθαρμοῦ χάριν ὡς ἐναγεῖς συναθροισθέντας ὑπερορίου ἐκβεβλήσθαι.*

mors that might help persuade Antiochus Sidetes to eradicate the nation.<sup>60</sup> How large a role did the leper libel play in their importuning and how central was it to their case? Very hard to say. What we do know, however, is that Antiochus rejected all their arguments, ended the siege, and absolved the Jews of the accusations leveled against them.<sup>61</sup> In short, whatever significance the leper libel may have possessed amidst the welter of charges, it certainly did not carry the day. The slander was summarily dismissed.<sup>62</sup>

One last author picked up the tale of the Jews' expulsion from Egypt and made apparent allusion to the leper libel. The great Roman historian Tacitus at the end of the first century C.E. devoted a long excursus in his *Histories* to a discussion of Jewish practices, experiences, and characteristics, mostly with a cynical and jaundiced eye.<sup>63</sup> He evidently had access to some of the variant traditions that appeared in authors like Manetho, Apion, Chaeremon, Lysimachus, and Trogus. Most writers agree, he observes, that a pestilence prompted the expulsion of the Jews from Egypt. He sets that event in the reign of Bocchoris on the advice of the oracle of Ammon, a close parallel to Lysimachus' version. As Tacitus reports it, when a plague broke out in Egypt which disfigured the body, Ammon instructed the king to purge his kingdom by ridding it of that race of men who were hateful to the gods.<sup>64</sup> There followed the familiar story of Hebrews herded into the desert and then guided out of it by Moses. Here too the leper libel is there but quite muted. The term itself does not appear, although the "pestilence" that "disfigures bodies" can certainly lend itself to that interpretation. What stands out here, however, is that the allusion does not serve as a campaign of vilification against Jews. They are, to be sure, characterized as

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**60** Diodorus Siculus, 34/5.1.3–4.

**61** Diodorus Siculus, 34/5.1.5: ἀπέλυσε τῶν ἐγκλημάτων τοὺς Ἰουδαίους.

**62** A closely similar story about the siege of Jerusalem is told by Josephus who gives a fuller version of the events but a briefer account of the king's advisers' efforts to press for genocide on the grounds of the Jews' alleged isolationism; *Ant.* 13.236–248. He makes no mention however, of the leper libel. The similarity of the two versions has induced many to postulate a common source, namely Posidonius of Apamea. But there are good reasons to question that conclusion. See Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, 440–57.

**63** See the extensive treatment by R. Bloch, *Antike Vorstellungen vom Judentum: Der Judenexkurs des Tacitus im Rahmen der griechisch-römischen Ethnographie* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2002). An analysis of Tacitean irony in this excursus may be found in Gruen, *Rethinking the Other*, 179–96.

**64** Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.3.1: *plurimi auctores consentiunt orta per Aegyptum tabe quae corpora foederat, regem Bocchorim adito Hammonis oraculo remedium petentem purgare regnum et id genus hominum ut invisum deis alias in terras avehere iussum.*

“hateful to the gods,” but the gods in question are the Egyptian gods, not divinities whom the good Roman historian would have found admirable.

Moreover, Tacitus describes with admiration, whether begrudging or not, Moses’ leadership in urging his flock, abandoned in dire straits by men and gods, to rely on their own resources which in fact served not only to get them through the desert but allowed them to conquer a land, found a city, and consecrate a temple.<sup>65</sup> Whatever taint the scabrous body might have implied was heavily outweighed by the achievements of the people. Even the sardonic and scornful Tacitus refrained from fastening the leper libel on a banner of antisemitism.<sup>66</sup>

To conclude, this paper does not endeavor to whitewash pagan critics of Jews in antiquity. Suspicion, disdain, and antipathy toward Jews certainly did exist. Discomfort with their reclusiveness, mockery of their peculiar customs, misunderstanding of their religious beliefs, irritation with their ethnocentricity all played a role in marginalizing the Jews. Whether any of it rose to the level of antisemitism, however, is more questionable. This essay has fastened upon the two most malicious and pernicious charges leveled against Jews, the blood libel and the leper libel, and has endeavored to show that, troubling as they might seem, their impact and significance were far less consequential than is often realized. The accusation of human sacrifice makes only the rarest appearance in our texts and seems never to have caught on as a serious complaint. In its most virulent form, it owes more to the agenda of Josephus seeking to discredit its perpetrator than to any genuine conviction. The association of Jews with lepers and the unclean, although conveyed by more sources in diverse versions, emerges only in connection with the exodus from Egypt. And even there the tales are either manipulated by Josephus for his own ends, riddled with ambiguity, or too muted in significance to be effective means of defamation. None of them amounts to anything resembling what we might regard as genuine antisemitism. For those who seek models or precursors of contemporary expressions of racist hostility against Jews will not easily find them in antiquity. Tolerance was far more prevalent than persecution. It is time to stop hanging the wicked label of antisemitism upon the Greeks and the Romans—who already have enough wickedness to answer for.

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<sup>65</sup> Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.3.2–3. Gager (*Moses*, 127–28, and *Origins of Anti-Semitism*, 63–64) recognizes the positive features in the description of Moses but sees them as indicating the rebellious character of the Jews. Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 31–33, sees only the negative aspects; similarly, Bloch, *Antike Vorstellungen*, 88–89; cf. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 192–94.

<sup>66</sup> We ignore here three brief later references to leprous spots on Moses. These are all derivative from the exodus story and have no pejorative connotation. See Gager, *Moses*, 129–32.

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Paula Fredriksen

## Divinity, Ethnicity, Identity: “Religion” as a Political Category in Christian Antiquity

In the mid-fifth century, ruling a rump Roman Empire from Constantinople, the emperor Theodosius II decided to collect and to catalogue into one body the earlier and very varied records of Roman legal rulings. The fruits of his initiative, the Codex Theodosianus, embodies Late Roman culture’s concerns with ordering specialist knowledge, politics, and power.<sup>1</sup> This is especially true for Book 16 of the Codex, “On Religion.” Like many of the legal archives upon which it draws, Book 16 is concerned with regulating relations between heaven and earth in order to ensure the wellbeing of the empire. Heaven’s denomination might have changed after 312 C.E., but the goal of religion remained the same: to secure divine patronage for the common weal. Thus, when Theodosius II, convening the Third Ecumenical Council in 429, expressed the hope that “the condition of the church might honor God *and contribute to the safety of the Empire*,”<sup>2</sup> he echoed the kind of practical piety expressed almost half a millennium earlier by Cicero, who likewise opined that proper cult “is not only of concern to religion, but also to the well-being of the state.”<sup>3</sup> In other words,

the basic conception [of this late imperial religious legislation] was Roman rather than Christian. Constantine wished to maintain the *pax deorum* as his predecessors had done; but he looked to a new divinity and for new procedures to maintain it.<sup>4</sup>

The conceptualization of and the motivation for Book 16 of the Codex, as for its preceding fifteen books, may indeed be “Roman.” But the precisions of its new legal taxonomies are exactly and characteristically “Christian.”<sup>5</sup> Book 16 does

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1 Cf. C. Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels, and the Sirmondian Constitutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).

2 *Acta consiliorum oecumenicorum*, ed. E. Schwartz and J. Straub (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1914), I:1,1,114

3 Cicero, *De legibus*, ed. N. Rudd (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1987), I:1.12.30.

4 J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 292.

5 On the “Christianization” of epistemology in the Theodosian period (c. 380–450 C.E.), see now M. Letteney, “Christianizing Knowledge: A New Order of Books in the Theodosian Age” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2020). On the way that Book 16’s repurposing earlier rulings against divination and magical practices takes aim at current pagan liturgical traditions, see I. Sandwell, “Outlawing ‘Magic’ or Outlawing ‘Religion’? Libanius and the Theodosian Code

more than establish correct protocols for the imperial (thus, “orthodox” and *katholika*) church—regulating priestly personnel, liturgical practices, financial arrangements, and so on. It also defines “deviance.”<sup>6</sup> Who are these deviants? In what ways are they deviant?

According to the Codex, such persons are:

1. Those who contend about religion
2. Heretics
3. Apostates
4. Jews, Caelicolists, and Samaritans
5. Pagans

Religious deviance is dangerous. It undermines the safety and prosperity of the Empire. And, in accordance with the categories of the Codex Theodosianus, “religious deviance” flirts with being “illegal.” We must emend, then, our sense of similarity between our two Roman authorities. The pagan Cicero and the Christian Theodosius II might seem to express a similar *pietas* or *eusebeia*; but the new, later legal taxonomies of deviance both create and witness to the Late Empire’s redefining of diplomatic relations between heaven and earth: it invents the idea of “illegal” religion. To see how this is so, we should glance backwards toward the Greco-Roman world in those centuries between Alexander the Great (d. 323 B.C.E.) and Constantine (d. 337 C.E.).

An embarrassing fact of my discipline—the study of ancient “religion”—is that “religion” as we in the twenty-first century envisage it did not actually exist in antiquity. What modern people think of as “religion,” ancient people articulated and experienced as family inheritance, “ancestral custom”: *paradoseis tōn paterōn, ta patria, mos maiorum, hoi patrioi nomoi*.<sup>7</sup> “In the Roman world, religion and ethnic loyalties were inseparable.”<sup>8</sup> To state this idea otherwise: One’s *ethnos* defined one’s *ethē* and, thus, one’s gods and one’s inherited practices to please those gods. To put it a third way: cult was an ethnic designation, and ethnicity was a cult designation. To put it a fourth way: in pre-Christian an-

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as Evidence for Legislation against ‘Pagan’ Practices,” in *The Spread of Christianity in the First Four Centuries: Essays in Explanation*, ed. W. V. Harris (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 87–123.

<sup>6</sup> I draw here in part on J. Rüpke, *Religious Deviance in the Roman World: Superstition or Individuality?*, trans. D. M. B. Richardson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> On these distinctions and their importance for the study of gods and humans in antiquity, see esp. B. Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> B. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 500.

tiquity, gods ran in the blood. Peoples and their pantheons shared a family connection.<sup>9</sup>

“Ethnicity”—“people-ness”—organized relations between heaven and earth. We see this identification of peoples, places, language, rites and gods in ancient definitions that cluster land, language, family relations, and ancestral custom. A prime biblical example of this “ethnic reasoning” occurs at Genesis 10, supplemented by Deut 32:8–9. Right after the flood and the survival of Noah and his family, Genesis 10 speaks of the renewal of humanity through Noah’s three sons. The “Table of Nations” in this chapter traces out the descent of seventy “people groups” (גוים, *goyim*, / ἔθνη, *ethnē*) “according to their lands, their languages, their families, and in their nations.” Please note: “gods” (אלהים, *elohim*) are conspicuously missing from this bundle of ethnic identifiers. At this point in the biblical narrative, other gods have yet to assume a major role (though cf. Gen 6:2–4). At Deut 32:8–9, however, when Moses reprises this episode, he speaks of God’s dividing humanity “according to the number of the gods” (NRSV; *benei elohim*).<sup>10</sup>

Herodotus (fifth c. B.C.E.) offers a similar concept-cluster when defining τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν (*to hellēnikon*), “Greekness.” He lists shared blood (ᾠμαίμον, *omaimon*), a “family” and descent connection. Like the writer of Genesis, he signals

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<sup>9</sup> I speak here of “normal” ancient gods, the gods of people-groups. Philosophy as a cultural meta-discourse, by contrast, reformatted the idea of *theos*. “God” or “Divinity” served as one of the categories shaping a discourse aimed at rationally organizing the elements of the “real”: *theos*, *cosmos*, *anthrōpos*, *psychē*, *noûs* (“rational mind”), and so on. Philosophy as meta-discourse stood to the side of traditional piety. It was not inherited and communally enacted so much as voluntarily chosen, taught, and learned among elites. Some philosophies were non-theistic; others (like that of the much-maligned Epicurus) featured divine powers that were less emotionally invested in human behaviors than were those ethnic gods who filled traditional narratives, who lived in local social space, and who engaged, along with their humans, in inter-city politics, diplomacy, and war. For theistic philosophies, especially the Platonic genre, the single, highest god was literally in a class by itself: radically transcendent, non-gendered, non-city-specific—indeed, beyond *cosmos* itself—and, thus, non-ethnic as well. Eventually, in the second century C.E., the god of the Bible/LXX will lose his Jewish identity, as some gentile Christian theologies identify him with the high god of philosophical *paideia*.

<sup>10</sup> The LXX gives “angels” as the divine appointees, ἀγγέλων θεοῦ (*angelōn theou*) interpreting the בני אלהים (*benei elohim*, “sons of God”) of 4QDeut<sup>f</sup>, whereas the MT has בני ישראל (*benei Israel*, “sons of Israel”). In Jub 15:31, these “ruling spirits” deceive the nations: they are descended from the watchers; cf. Jub 10:2–9. See P. Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 154–60; on the plurality of divinities in Jewish scriptural traditions, see further W. Horbury, “Jewish and Christian Monotheism in the Herodian Age,” in *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism*, ed. L. T. Stuckenbruck and W. E. S. North (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 16–44 (esp. 20–21 for many primary references in Jewish sources to other gods).

shared language as an ethnic identifier (ὁμόγλωσσα, *homoglōssa*). The vertical silo of heaven/earth lines up around shared divinities, sanctuaries and sacrifices (θεῶν ἰδρύματα κοινά καὶ θυσία, *theōn idrymata koina kai thysia*); and, governing these, the heritage of shared customs (ἔθρα ὁμότροπα, *ethea homotropa*).<sup>11</sup> Family, language, locality and divinity (the shared sanctuaries), and inherited custom: these make a Greek “Greek.”<sup>12</sup>

My third example of ancient constructs of ethnicity comes from the apostle Paul in Rom 9:3–5. Paul in this passage lists the identifiers of *his* kinship group, Israel, his *syngeneis*. To members of this descent group belong divine “son-adoption,” υἰοθεσία (*hiothesia*).<sup>13</sup> This sonship expresses the family connection between heaven and earth: the god of Israel is also Israel’s “father.” To them is the δόξα (*doxa*) translated “glory” in the RSV and in the NRSV. This vague-sounding attribute refers both to heaven and to earth, that is, both to the glorious presence of Israel’s god and to the place of that presence, Jerusalem or, more specifically, the temple, his earthly dwelling (cf. Matt 23:21). To Israel belong the covenants (διαθήκαι, *diathēkai*), the giving of the Law (νομοθεσία, *nomothesia*), and the “worship.” This last item, λατρεία (*latreia*) “cult,” again indicates place—the altar of Jerusalem’s temple—as well as the inherited or ancestral practices and traditions for enacting that cult (what Paul elsewhere calls αἱ πατρικαὶ μου παραδόσεις, *hai patrikai mou paradoseis*, Gal 1:14).<sup>14</sup>

11 Cf. Herodotus, *Hist.* 8.144.2–3.

12 See esp. I. Malkin, ed., *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies, Harvard University, 2001).

13 Paul’s word choice is very deliberate here—as we should expect of a Pharisee. Divine/human *syngeneia* for pagans assumed biological lineage: Mediterranean gods took human sexual partners, from which unions civic populations might spring. People-groups, especially their leaders, sprang from these unions. These peoples shared with their gods specific languages and locations, and received from them preferred protocols for showing respect (which moderns would designate “religion”). So realistically was this divine-human relationship imagined that it supported networks of inter-city diplomacy, on which see esp. C. P. Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). Israel’s god took no human sexual partner. Israel’s “sonship” thus was affective and covenantal, not biological, hence Paul’s deployment of the Roman legal term for “son-making” or “son-adoption” here, to express this biblical commonplace of Israel as God’s “son.” Note, too, that, unlike the gentiles, Paul maintains that Israel’s sonship is *not* mediated through Christ, or Christ’s *pneuma* (cf., e.g., Gal 3:26, 4:5–7; Rom 8:14–17).

14 On the ethnicity of Israel’s god, see P. Fredriksen, “How Jewish is God? Divine ethnicity in Paul’s Theology,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137, no. 1 (2018): 193–212. Unlike most of his Greco-Roman colleagues, however, Israel’s god was both local (present especially in Jerusalem’s temple, Matt 23:21) and radically trans-local.

These distinctive privileges echo the shared blood, sanctuaries, sacrifices, and customs listed by Herodotus. Both sets of protocols, pagan and Jewish, bind the human ethnic groups to each other trans-temporally (across generations) and contemporarily (within current group), as well as to their god(s). Note too that, unlike Genesis 10 and Herodotus, Paul cannot use ὁμόγλωσσα (*homoglōssa*, “shared language”) as a linguistic marker for his people who, in his lifetime, were broadly divided between Semitic languages (Hebrew and/or Aramaic) and Greek. But Paul does lift up ethnic language—God’s no less than Israel’s—as a family/ethnicity identifier in a very important connection. Within Paul’s branch of this mid-century messianic movement, pagans can be “adopted” into the family of Israel’s god through infusion with divine *pneuma*, having Christ “in” them while being themselves “in” Christ.<sup>15</sup> God’s newly adopted expagan sons are thereby enabled to address him with his Jewish family name in the Jewish family tongue: baptized gentiles, teaches Paul, can now call God “Abba” (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15).

These correspondences between heaven and earth, imagined as *syngeneia* (“kinship”), held true at the micro-level (the *oikos* or *domus*) of family gods and ancestors, and true at the macro-level of city gods. For this reason, Jews who lived abroad in Greco-Roman cities were sometimes put in an awkward situation. Citizenship could be configured as membership in an urban *genos*—this, recall, was a prime mechanism for effecting inter-city kinship diplomacy. Being a citizen required the public display of respect to the gods who presided over the city’s welfare. Ancient cities, in other words, were “family”-based religious institutions. The Jewish god, however, was famously particular about his people’s *not* giving cult to other deities.<sup>16</sup> Jewish town councilors, ephebes, and athletes all managed, somehow, to honor their city’s god(s) while avoiding (or being thought to avoid) sacrifice; but our inscriptions and papyri reveal none of the details.

Jews and, later, Christians knew that these other gods truly existed. Idols might be “nothing,” but the power represented by the idol was definitely “something” (often a *daimonion*: not “demon” but, rather, a “godling,” cf. Ps 95:5 LXX). One’s obligations to heaven were configured according to what was due, first, to one’s *own* god(s). *Eusebeia* or *pietas* (“piety”) did not measure what moderns think of as sincerity or strength or authenticity of “belief” (and interior, mental act). Rather, “piety” indexed attentiveness in the execution of inherited protocols of worship: So also *pistis* and *fides*. Often translated as “belief,” *pistis* indicated

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15 The theological meditations on Paul’s meanings here are endless. For an anthropology-inflected understanding as spirit-possession, see G. B. Bazzana, *Having the Spirit of Christ: Spirit Possession and Exorcism in the Early Christ Groups* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

16 Cf. Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.65; Josephus, *A.J.* 12.125–26.

conviction, that is, confidence that the ancestral protocols in fact pleased the god; *fides* (often translated “faith”) attested to loyalty to ancestral traditions and scrupulousness in performing them. “Allegiance” might better translate the terms.<sup>17</sup>

In the crowded ancient geo-centric Mediterranean cosmos, all gods existed, their existence witnessed in part by the existence of their humans. Diaspora Jews managed somehow to show respect to their divine neighbors—and thus, to their human ones—while drawing the line, most of the time, at full participation in public cult. Their scruples occasionally irritated pagan ethnographers, who complained of Jewish *atheôtēs* (“atheism”) or *asebeia* (“impiety”) or *amixia* (avoidance of others). But classical ethnographers made such complaints about all “other” ethnic groups, generalizing egregiously while lumping together in a swamp of common insult Egyptians and Celts, Germans and Phoenicians, Persians and Jews.<sup>18</sup> In Mediterranean cities of the early Empire, however, people generally seemed to have known that the Jew’s god was cultically particular, and that this was one of the ancestral oddities of this particular group.<sup>19</sup> Eventually, the cultural importance of these other groups will fade: the anti-Jewish insults lived on and on, repurposed, for their own reasons, by later gentile churches.

That different peoples had their own gods and, thus, customs was a commonplace of ancient ethnography and a fact of ancient culture. “In [the Roman] empire,” notes the second-century Christian apologist Athenagoras, “different nations have different customs, and no one is hindered by law or by fear of punishment from following his ancestral customs, no matter how ridiculous these may be.”<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the pagan Celsus comments that Jews “observe a

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**17** On these issues of interpretation and inference, see esp. T. Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

**18** For analysis of these various insults and complaints see Isaac, *Invention of Racism*, 440–91. Primary texts plus excellent commentary in M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Dorot Press, 1974–1994).

**19** Apion complained that Jews wanted Alexandrian citizenship without honoring Alexandrian gods, Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.65; *A.J.* 12.125–26, where the pagan Ionians speak of citizens as *syngeneis*, “kinsmen” who worship the same gods. For an overview of the legal history that Josephus preserves, see M. Pucci Ben Zeev, *Jewish Rights in the Roman World: The Greek and Roman Documents Quoted by Josephus Flavius* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998). Further on inscriptions about Jewish town councilors, P. Trebilco, “The Christian and Jewish Eumeneian Formula,” in *Negotiating Diaspora: Jewish Strategies in the Roman Empire*, ed. J. M. G. Barclay (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 66–88, at 79–80. See also *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation*, ed. and trans. A. Linder (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), where, pre-312, *superstitio* with respect to Judaism should be understood as “foreign cult.”

**20** Athenagoras, *Legatio pro Christianis*, ed. M. Marcovich (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990), leg. 1.

worship which may be very peculiar, but at least it is traditional. In this respect they behave like the rest of mankind, because each nation (*ethnos*) follows its particular customs.”<sup>21</sup>

If we accept these two descriptions of ancient divine/human relations—shared *syngeneia* (kinship) and *ethē* (ancestral custom)—then we can venture a third, extending to power politics. An anthropological definition of empire, “the greatest number of peoples under a single government,” can be restated theologically: “the greatest number of gods under a single government.” What we think of as “religion”—relations between heaven and earth—was inflected along ethnic lines (with individual cities construing their citizens as composing their own *genos* or *ethnos*, “people-group”).

Mediterranean empires, whether Hellenistic or Roman, were in consequence extremely commodious in terms of what we think of as “religion.” To label all of this breathing space as “religious tolerance” is to misdescribe it with a word drawn from our own, later, civil societies. *Ancient empire embodied pragmatic pluralism*. If every people had its own god(s), if all gods exist,<sup>22</sup> if cult makes gods happy, and—perhaps the most important point of all—if *any* god is more powerful than *any* human, then such a posture simply made good sense. Warfare, of course, always tested the military mettle of gods no less than of men: gods were defeated when their peoples were defeated by the gods of the other side. This commonsense construal of contesting divine powers caused some embarrassment for those second-century gentile Christians who claimed the Jewish scriptures in Greek as their own sacred texts: after 70 C.E., with Titus’s destruction of Jerusalem, outsiders inferred that the god of the Jews had been defeated by the gods of Rome.<sup>23</sup>

With the eventual formation of gentile Christianities in the second and third centuries, however, this practical pluralism failed. In various circumstances and in different places, some gentile Christians resisted a public display of honor to their native gentile deities. How such people came to the attention of govern-

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21 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, ed. H. Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 5.25.

22 Unlike its modern usage, “monotheism” in antiquity presupposed the existence of many gods: those other divinities were simply lower than the single “highest” god. On the congested world of ancient divinity, even in its monotheist iterations, see P. Fredriksen, *Paul. The Pagans’ Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 12, 68–69, 187 nn. 9 and 12, 237 n. 14, 241 n. 29.

23 Minucius Felix repeats this jibe, *Octavius*, ed. B. Kytzler (Leipzig: Teubner, 2012), 10.4; cf. Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, ed. C. Becker (Munich: Kösel, 1952), 26, and 25.14–16 on other defeated, ethnic gods; Origen, *Cels.* 4.32; Augustine, *Answer to Faustus, a Manichaean (Contra Faustum Manichaeum)*, introduction, translation and notes by R. Teske (New York: New City Press, 2007), 15.1.



ment authorities is a confounding question.<sup>24</sup> Local catastrophes—fire, flood, famine, earthquake, or plague—were never theologically neutral events but registers of divine displeasure. Sacrifice to appease the gods and to restore and maintain good relations between heaven and earth was the remedy of choice. Perhaps some gentile Christians refused to join in these pious apotropaic activities. Ancient culture had no mechanisms in place to monitor participation; but those (ex-pagan) pagans, now Christians, could easily become the targets of local resentments and anxieties. Who were they to put the whole community at risk? Who dare insult the gods?<sup>25</sup>

The mid-third century represents a very specific inflection point in the interaction of “government,” “ethnicity,” and “religion.” Worn down through pandemic, dire environmental shifts and harrowing military defeats, the imperial government became proactively involved in attempting to reestablish good relations with the divine.<sup>26</sup> As noted by Caroline Humfress:

According to the emperor Decius (249 C.E.), maintaining correct relations between the human and the divine necessitated an empire-wide *supplicatio* of the gods, a legal requirement that effectively marked out Christians and Jews in different ways, and formed a further precedent for subsequent prosecutions concerning religious beliefs and practices.<sup>27</sup>

On account of their well-known ancient and ancestral *ethē*, Jews were excused from such initiatives. Gentile Christians, however, had no such legitimating ethnic, thus ancestral, allegiances: to the Roman eye, in the crisis of the mid-third century, gentile Christians were simply and obviously just deviant pagans and might be coerced accordingly. This effort at superintending respect for the gods resulted in an administrative nightmare: tax forms had to be adapted to reg-

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**24** The correspondence between Pliny (*ep.* 10.96) and Trajan on this issue is illuminating but not generalizable. On this vexed question, see esp. the essays assembled in G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom, and Orthodoxy*, ed. M. Whitby and J. Streeter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

**25** Especially C. Moss has revolutionized the historiography of martyrdom since W. H. C. Frend’s (unfortunately still classic) *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965). Cf. C. R. Moss, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom: Diverse Practices, Theologies, and Traditions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); C. R. Moss, *The Myth of Persecution* (New York: Harper Collins 2013), on martyr stories as discursive identity construction rather than historical reportage

**26** On this convergence of misery, see K. Harper, *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

**27** C. Humfress, “Ordering Divine Knowledge in Late Roman Legal Discourse,” in *Emperors and the Divine – Rome and its Influence*, ed. M. Kahlos (Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, 2016), 169.

ister citizen sacrifices.<sup>28</sup> And these mandated pieties left in their wake a trail of “lapsed” Christians, both clerical and lay, who had complied with the government’s demand. The result was a crisis of community discipline for churches, which had to devise ways to reintegrate the lapsed, while controlling the unofficial charisma of those who, though imprisoned as willing martyrs, had managed to survive.

These imperial initiatives came and went in fits and starts. Diocletian, in 302, led one last effort to suppress Christian communities.<sup>29</sup> The initiative ended, a decade later, in a very consequential if unintended denouement: the victorious western strongman, Constantine, decided to invest his personal allegiance and powerful patronage in one particular sect of the Christian church. Its bishops, happily availing themselves of their new access to power, guided Constantine’s coercive efforts against ecclesiastical rivals.

Thus began the final stage of the Roman imperial persecution of Christians. More Christians were persecuted, and persecuted more thoroughly, *after* the conversion of Constantine than before.<sup>30</sup> Our later Theodosian taxonomies shed light on why: Sectarians were now “heretics,” and their deviance from “the true Church” (howsoever that was imperially defined) represented a security threat to the empire. Pagans, too, were coercively importuned: temples closed, destroyed, or re-purposed; public *latreia* curtailed or forbidden; public monies diverted from municipal celebrations.

And the toxic vocabulary of two centuries of gentile Christian rhetoric and theology *adversus Iudaeos*—defining and deriding intra-Christian competitors by likening them to “the Jews”—metastasized into the legal language of the

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. J. Rives, “The Decree of Decius and the Religion of the Empire,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 89 (1999): 135–54.

<sup>29</sup> On the political/cultural/religious *Umwelt* accounting for Diocletian’s decision, see esp. E. D. Digeer, *A Threat to Public Piety: Christians, Platonists, and the Great Persecution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

<sup>30</sup> “Religious coercion on a large scale was mainly practiced by Christians on other Christians,” P. Brown, “Christianization and Religious Conflict,” in *Cambridge Ancient History XIII: The Late Empire, A.D. 337–425*, ed. A. Cameron and P. Garnsey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 642. So too G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, “Heresy, Schism and Persecution in the Later Roman Empire,” in *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom and Orthodoxy*, ed. M. Whitby and J. Streeter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 201–29. B. Shaw, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), conveys in impeccable, oppressive detail the ways that Augustine orchestrated the imperial suppression of dissident North African Catholics, through mobilizing the laws against “heresy.”

state.<sup>31</sup> The painful irony is that it was originally (Hellenistic) *Jewish* texts—Paul’s letters, the gospels, and behind them, a bottomless font of anti-Jewish invective, the Septuagint’s texts themselves—that sourced and fed Christian traditions *adversus Iudaeos*. Once the ethnicity of readership shifted from Greek-speaking Jews to Greek-speaking ex-pagan gentiles, intra-Jewish polemic became anti-Jewish polemic. Originally, historically Jewish foundational figures such as Jesus, or Peter, or Paul were seen by second century gentile Christians in their own image: not as “Jews” but as “Christians” (that last term itself of late first/early second-century coinage).<sup>32</sup> And within this binary system, if “gentile” and “Christian” were “good,” then Jews and Judaism were bad—which is why calling another Christian gentile a “Jew” packed the rhetorical punch that it did.<sup>33</sup> By the year 312 C.E., rhetoric *contra Iudaeos* had become a drive-wheel of “orthodox” Christian identity. Constantine’s patronage only expanded the opportunities for its deployment (see just below). By the early fifth century, what Brent Shaw has called “a fixed geometry of hatred”<sup>34</sup>—heretics, pagans, and Jews—came to legally define the contours of religious deviance.

In the view of the mid-fifth century editors of Theodosius’s Codex, “heretics,” though Christian, were false insiders. “Pagans” were wayward outsiders. As such, members of either group, from the fourth century on, might find themselves the objects of unwanted popular attention, legal harassment, and urban violence. The deployment and, in the case of “pagan,” the very creation of the term itself as a new religious idiom, attest to the fact that no category for “illegal religion”—or, for that matter, for “legal religion”—ever preceded Constantine’s early fourth-century shift of theological allegiance. *Religio licita*, the phrase derived from Tertullian’s pungent rhetoric, is a modern academic confection intended to explain pagan Rome’s anti-Christian persecutions. The state went after the church (which was, supposedly, *illicita*) but left the synagogue alone (because Judaism was *certe licita*<sup>35</sup>). So goes the argument; but it is frustrated

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31 On the origins, development, and deployment of anti-Jewish rhetoric against intra-Christian rivals, see P. Fredriksen and O. Irshai, “Christianity and Judaism in Late Antiquity: Polemics and Policies, from the Second to the Seventh Centuries,” in *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, vol. 4 of *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. S. T. Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 977–1035.

32 Cf. J. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) gives a clear orientation to the social dynamics contributory to this invective.

33 Cf. e.g. Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, ed. E. Kroymann (Turnholt: Brepols, 1954), lib. 3 passim.

34 Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 276.

35 Tertullian, *Apol.* 21.1

by historical evidence. *Religio licita* was never was a term of law, because “religion”—traditional cult; ancestral practices—was simply a normal aspect of any subject *gens* or *natio* or *genos* or *ethnē*.<sup>36</sup> Peoples and gods formed family groups. Heaven itself was individuated along ethnic lines.

The Jews, in this early fourth-century changeover from pagan to Christian empire, were a special case. Like everyone else, Jews could find themselves on the receiving end of mob violence. But pre-Christian Roman legal tradition in general prevailed, and Judaism—unlike paganism and heresy—even when marginalized, was nonetheless never actually outlawed. Jewish communities not only remained protected by legislation framed at the highest levels of government; they also continued to attract sympathetic attention and social support at a popular level.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the hostility of ecclesiastical writers, their repeated efforts to delegitimize and disallow Christian involvement (both clerical and lay) in synagogue activities, and their insistence that Judaism itself represented the ultimate anti-type of the True Faith, obliquely witness to a positive orientation toward Jews and Judaism on the part of many in their own congregations whom they were attempting to convince.<sup>38</sup>

And yet, in exactly this period, anti-Jewish invective grew and bloomed. The reasons had nothing directly to do with real Jews and everything to do with imperial efforts to define, mandate, and control “orthodoxy.” Emperors sought consensus through sponsoring creeds and underwriting trans-imperial councils. Their efforts led only to further fracturing, with all sides (especially during the Christological convulsions of the fifth century) accusing their Christian rivals of being “just like the Jews,” “in league with the Jews,” or “worse than the Jews.” The greater the church’s internal diversity, the louder the anti-Jewish rhetoric, and the more ubiquitous the “rhetorical Jews” of intra-Christian polemic. Its tropes found full expression in the commentaries, treatises, church histories, and

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**36** So too Isaac, *Racism*, 449; P. Fredriksen, “Mandatory Retirement: Ideas in the Study of Christian Origins whose Time Has Come to Go,” *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses* 35 (2006): 231–39.

**37** The donor inscription from Aphrodisias, if dated to the mid-fourth to late fifth century, would be further evidence of this, A. Chaniotis, “The Jews of Aphrodisias: New Evidence and Old Problems,” *Scripta Classica Israelica* 21 (2002): 209–42. For the comfortably chaotic intra-communal mixing in Chrysostom’s Antioch, see C. Shepardson, “Between Polemic and Propaganda: Evoking the Jews of Fourth-Century Antioch,” *JJMJS* 2 (2015): 151–82.

**38** For both ecclesiastical and imperial efforts to enforce separation between Christians and Jews, see the two important compendia of legal materials by A. Linder, ed., *The Jews in the Legal Sources of the Early Middle Ages* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997) and A. Linder, ed., *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987).

especially (and most dangerously) in the fourth- and fifth-century equivalent of social media, the sermons of voluble churchmen.

These literatures index, first of all, the vituperation lavished by bishops on their Christian rivals. But it also betrays the “push” of clerical disapproval against the synagogue’s “pull” of popular attraction. (Chrysostom’s high holiday sermons, delivered in Antioch in 387, provide a premier example.<sup>39</sup>) During roughly the same period, church councils repeatedly published canons that attempted to establish and enforce a separation of Christians, both clerical and lay, from Jews. These prohibitions reveal the situation on the ground: some gentile Christians kept the Jewish Sabbath as a day of rest, and worked on Sundays (Laodicea, c. 29); they received festival gifts from Jews and heretics (c. 37), accepted matzah and participated in Jewish “impieties” (c. 38). They shared in Jewish fasts and feasts (Apostolic Canons, c. 69); tended lamps in synagogues on feast days (c. 70); joined with Jews and heretics in prayer (c. 63), and gave their children to Jews in marriage (Chalcedon, c. 14).<sup>40</sup> And the lunar Jewish calendar—especially the date of Pesach relative to Easter—continued to influence Christian communal celebration, Constantine’s pointed efforts at Nicaea notwithstanding.<sup>41</sup>

Orthodoxy’s efforts against the synagogue were further complicated by its own canon. Unlike several of its various rivals, the church backed by Constantine had laid claim to the Septuagint: scriptures enjoining and praising fidelity to Jewish law were, as the Old Testament, part of the church’s own sacred texts, thus read aloud regularly whenever the community gathered for worship. Further, what went on in the synagogue (not least the public readings in the vernac-

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**39** These sermons catalogue the Jewish practices of John’s gentile Christian congregation, who attend synagogue on the Sabbath and the high holy days (1.5; 8.8), go to hear the “trumpets” (Rosh haShanah; 1:5), fast on Yom Kippur (1.2), and join in “pitching tents” (that is, erecting *sukkot*, 7.1). Wilken notes that John, Theodoret of Cyrus, and the Apostolic Constitutions likewise criticize gentile Christians for frequenting *mikvaot*, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 75; J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom, Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 63–66.

**40** Cf. Linder, *Legal Sources*; still valuable, too, is J. Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961; orig. pub. 1934), 174–77.

**41** See esp. Wilken’s comments on this “dispute about religious and communal identity” in the year 387, when 14 Nisan fell on Easter Sunday, *Chrysostom*, 76–79. For Constantine’s fulminations against Quartodecimans, see Eusebius, *De vita Constantini / Über das Leben Konstantins*, ed. H. Schneider (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 3.18–19; see too notes in A. Cameron and S. G. Hall, *Eusebius: Life of Constantine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 269–72.

ular from the Pentateuch and the prophets, and recitation of psalms) could not be alien to Greek-speaking Christian visitors. As a matter of theological principle, this church identified its high god, through the pre-incarnate Christ, with the god of Israel. And in the four canonical gospels, read regularly in Christian community service, Jesus of Nazareth was portrayed as an observant Jew (Matt 5:17–19), worshiping in the synagogue, keeping the great Jewish pilgrimage festivals, reciting the *Sh'ma* (Mark 12:29), wearing *tzitziot* (the *kraspeda* of Mark 6:56), giving instruction on fasting and prayer, on offerings at the Temple (Matt 5:23–24) and the appropriate dimensions of *tefillin* (Matt 23:5). The supersessionist rhetoric of the *contra Iudaeos* tradition notwithstanding, then, many gentile Christians evidently perceived Jewish practice as continuous from the Old Testament through the New Testament to their contemporary Jewish neighbors. Indeed, some Christian Judaizers justified their voluntary observance of Jewish law by pointing precisely to the example of Christ, whose practices they wanted to imitate.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, though both traditional polytheism (in Paul's letters) and "deviant" Christianity (in, e.g., Matt 7:21–23, the Johannine epistles, and several deutero-Paulines) were roundly condemned in the New Testament itself, Judaism as such was not. The orthodox had to settle for condemning the Jewish practice of Judaism, complaining that Jews interpreted and observed in a "fleshly" way a Law meant to be understood and kept "spiritually," that is, according to (orthodox, gentile) Christian interpretation. And by holding not Romans (who were redeemed by their conversion to Christianity) but Jews (who continued to preserve their own ancestral practices) as particularly responsible for the death of Jesus Christ, ecclesiastical tradition focused, fueled, and justified continuing, annually aggravated anti-Jewish hostility. Nonetheless, Judaism was never and could never be in the same relation to the church that paganism and heresy were, if only for the reason that Judaism, as the *Hebraica veritas* of orthodoxy's own self-understanding, was incontrovertibly the source of (true) Christianity. As Augustine observed, though the Church was the bride of Christ, the synagogue was his mother.<sup>43</sup> The imperial church's rise to power did little to resolve the tra-

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<sup>42</sup> Christians justify their Judaizing by arguing that they should be imitators of Christ, Origen, *Commentary on Matthew / Commentarii in Evangelium Matthaei*, ed. T. P. Scheck (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 79; similarly Epiphanius of Salamis, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, Book I (Sects 1–46), trans. F. Williams (Leiden: Brill, 1987), *Haer.* 28.5.1; on keeping Pesach because Jesus did, John Chrysostom, *Eight Homilies Against the Jews / Adversus Iudaeos*, in *Patrologia Graeca* 48, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1862), 3.4 and 866; references with discussion in Wilken, *Chrysostom*, 92–94.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Augustine, *Faust.* 12.8.

dition's abiding and intrinsic ambivalence—an ambivalence visible in the imperial laws themselves.

Law is prescriptive, not descriptive. With the exception of North Africa's Donatists, I cannot venture with any security how the anathemas of Book 16 translated into the social experience of Late Roman subjects. Heretics, pagans, and Jews continued to live within the Empire, but their legal situation (and, depending on the temperament of the closest orthodox bishop, their *local* situation) was permanently destabilized. The precisions of Book 16's taxonomies, in brief, witness to Mediterranean empire's transition from practical pluralism, to statutory definitions of religious and, thus, of social deviance, to an inconstant, unstable, occasionally abusive "tolerance." Relations between heaven and earth were no longer primarily an ethnic patrimony but rather, and consequentially, a political choice. And—again depending on the temperament of the local bishop—sometimes violent liturgical rhetoric led to actual "hard" violence: the seizure of synagogues, the intimidation of Jewish populations, the coercive forcing of Jews to choose between baptism or exile.<sup>44</sup>

One last turn of this particular screw: the re-ethnicization of land, peoplehood, governance, and divinity in the post-Roman West. After 456 C.E., Visigothic warriors established themselves as a military ruling class in southern France and in central and eastern Spain. The newcomers' religious distinctiveness underscored their notional ethnic otherness: these Goths were Arian Christians, whose customs, liturgical practices, doctrines, and language marked them off from the far more numerous catholic, "Roman" population over whom they now ruled.<sup>45</sup>

Editing a digest of Roman laws for his subjects in 506, the Gothic king Alaric distilled ten laws concerning Jews from the fifty-three contained in Theodosius II's compendium. Alaric's *Breviary* aimed to ensure that Jews could not find themselves in positions of power over Christians, whether as masters to slaves, as husbands to wives, or as magistrates to plaintiffs. No law interfered with traditional Jewish observances internal to the community.

In 587 C.E., however, the Gothic King Reccared converted to Roman Christianity. Arian prelates prudently followed in 589. A long period of cooperation between monarchs and bishops began, aimed at unifying the ethnically and re-

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<sup>44</sup> On this whole coercive turn in Christian-Jewish relations, see esp. the comprehensive analysis by R. S. Kraemer, *The Mediterranean Diaspora in Late Antiquity: What Christianity cost the Jews* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>45</sup> The experience of Jews within the kingdoms of the post-Roman West varied enormously. For an overview of this destabilized social terrain, see the essays collected in Y. Hen, *Barbarians and Jews* (Turnholt: Brepols, 2018).

ligiously mixed kingdom. Toward this goal, Bishop Isidore of Seville (560–636), a major conduit of Augustinian theology to the later European Middle Ages, wrote *de fide catholica contra Iudaeos*. Isidore took Augustine’s theological justification for the coercion of heretics (originally aimed at Augustine’s contemporary North African Catholic rivals, the Donatist church) and knowingly redirected it against Iberian Jews—the sole religious minority that the Bishop of Hippo had specifically exempted from such muscular pastoral care.<sup>46</sup> Striving to unite *regnum* and *ecclesia*, Iberian kings and bishops reinterpreted the ancient synonymy of ethnicity and religion. Visigoths assumed that form of Christianity most identified with Hispano-Romans—namely, Nicene Catholicism—while Hispano-Romans assumed a new ethnic identity, Goth, while claiming historic roots in Spanish soil. The new (or renewed) Iberian kingdom would be supported by the three pillars of *gens*, *rex*, and *patria Gothorum*.

As a result, Jewish Romans lost their legal and their social footing. Early on, Jews could either be “naturalized” as catholic Goths through conversion (the inclusive option) or isolated and treated as pariah (the exclusive option). Eventually, however, notions of “blood” trumped every other category: even converted Jews, in later Visigothic canon law, were designated as *baptizati Iudaei* or simply as *Iudaei*, never as *Christiani*—and, thus, never as “Goths.” These particular Hispano-Romans, residents of the peninsula long before the Visigoths ever wandered so far south, became both by “blood” and by belief strangers in a strange land, an abiding “other,” an easy and defenseless target for local resentments, a settled population of resident aliens.

It is difficult, in the hindsight of history, not to draw a line from this seventh-century ontology of Jewishness to the twentieth century’s obsessive, denominationally ecumenical murder of European Jews. The former expressed the ethnic essentialism native to Mediterranean ethnographies; the latter combined centuries of religious prejudice bolstered by pseudo-scientific racism. And the violence that both forms of antisemitism sparked, sponsored, and excused was fed, as well, by simple human greed: from exploiting Iberian Jews’ economic

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<sup>46</sup> On Augustine’s theology *pro Iudaeos*, see P. Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 213–366; for his rhetoric *contra Iudaeos* (aimed, predictably, against Donatists), Shaw, “Ravens Feeding on Death,” in *Sacred Violence*; for the darkening Visigothic story, see P. Fredriksen, “Jewish Romans, Christian Romans, and the Post-Roman West: The Social Correlates of the *contra Iudaeos* Tradition,” in *Conflict and Religious Conversation in Latin Christendom: Studies in Honour of Ora Limor*, ed. I. J. Yuval and R. Ben-Shalom (Turnholt: Brepols, 2014), 23–53.



and physical vulnerability in the seventh century, to the twentieth century's pan-European feeding frenzy of theft, from high art to village huts.<sup>47</sup>

I was born in America, in 1951, in what I am coming to realize was a historically conditioned bubble. Post-Holocaust, outright antisemitism in America was simply not admissible in polite public society. Within one generation, I have already seen that change. The existence of the state of Israel (since 1948) has given excuse for the murder of Jews, Israeli or otherwise, throughout the globe. The internet has added massively, incalculably, to the metastasis of *fantaisiste* antisemitism. Pseudo-scientific biologies of racial supremacy and of racial degeneracy feed the resentful fantasies of untold numbers of internet users.

Even though the Shoah succeeded—Europe is a place of Jewish ghosts—and even though, in many ways, the Jews are no longer there, European antisemitism thrives. In the fall of 2019, marches in Europe and in England commemorating *Kristallnacht* ended with loud calls from protesting others to “Kill the Jews.” Places of worship and of higher education have been defaced with Nazi graffiti; some have been strafed with bullets. Donald Trump, in his role as president of the United States, has insisted on the moral equivalence of White Supremacist gangs and anti-racism counter protesters. (“There are good people on both sides.”) And just one day after the massacre in a Pittsburgh synagogue, this same US president obliquely bolstered an internet rumor that George Soros, the liberal Jewish financier, might very well be providing occluded support to immigrant “caravans” of Latin Americans threatening the “whiteness” of the United States’ southern border.

This list is virtually endless, but I need to conclude. And my conclusion is that antisemitism is the most plastic, resilient, and versatile of anti-social fantasies. It coheres with the political Right and equally well with the political Left. American Black Nationalists, in 2020 New Jersey, murdered Jews for their being too “white,” while the same year, a white supremacist shot up a California synagogue, murdering a Jewish woman, because Jews are not “white” enough. And anti-Zionism has continued to give respectable cover to good old-fashioned antisemitism.

Antisemitism, like any kind of racism, is at root irrational. Can it be overcome, then, by reason? As much as I would like to think so, I must confess that I fear not. But I nonetheless still hope so.

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<sup>47</sup> Jews returning from the camps *after* 1945 were slaughtered by neighbors unwilling to give them back their property.

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## **Comprehending Antisemitism in the Middle Ages**



Robert Chazan

# The Evolution of Anti-Jewish Imagery in Medieval Christian Europe

The horrific results of modern antisemitism during the Holocaust have given rise to extensive efforts to trace the history of this modern anti-Jewish thinking. These efforts have inevitably included considerable focus on the impact of traditional Christian imagery of Judaism and Jews on modern antisemitism, despite the conviction in many quarters that modern antisemitism was either non-Christian or perhaps even anti-Christian. The role of Christianity in the evolution of modern antisemitism has been analyzed extensively by many observers, pre-eminently by Jules Isaac.<sup>1</sup>

Of late, a number of researchers in medieval Jewish history have proposed that medieval Christian Europe introduced a new turn in Christian anti-Jewish sentiment. These scholars have suggested that traditional anti-Jewish motifs were bent in increasingly radical directions under the special circumstances of medieval Christian Europe.<sup>2</sup> Thus, while traditional Christian anti-Judaism played a role in the evolution of modern antisemitism, it was the innovative and radical anti-Jewish imagery produced in medieval Christian Europe that most immediately and most tellingly laid the foundations for the extreme anti-Jewish stereotypes purveyed by modern antisemites. This innovative medieval anti-Jewish imagery very much fostered the creation of the radical anti-Jewish stereotypes of the antisemitic thinkers and movements; perhaps even more importantly, this legacy from the European Middle Ages predisposed the European population at large to embrace the extreme anti-Jewish stereotypes disseminated by the antisemites. We shall examine briefly this new sense of the role of medieval Christian Europe in providing much of the foundation of modern antisemitism, beginning with pre-medieval Christian thinking and then proceeding to the medieval innovations.

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1 The broad conclusions reached by Jules Isaac are nicely summed up in his *The Teaching of Contempt*, trans. H. Weaver (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1964).

2 These researchers include: G. I. Langmuir, *History, Religion, and Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) and *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); A. Sapir Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 1995); and R. Chazan, *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) and *From Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).



Jesus and his immediate followers were clearly members of the fractious Jewish community in first-century Palestine. Where precisely they stood during this tumultuous period is unclear. Politically, were they for rebellion against Rome or against it? Where did they stand on the religious and spiritual issues that divided first-century Palestinian Jews? These questions cannot be answered in the absence of sources from the group itself. The only secure knowledge is that they surely perceived themselves and were perceived by others as Jews, attempting to live according to the covenant between God and Israel. In their own eyes, they certainly constituted the Jewish group that understood correctly that covenant; in the eyes of others, they were one of a number of Jewish groups that misread that covenant.<sup>3</sup>

Paul very much complicated the nature of the Jesus movement and its relationship to Judaism and Jews.<sup>4</sup> Paul, a diaspora Jew who came to Jerusalem seemingly to study and became an active opponent of the Jesus movement, eventually embraced that movement and became a leader with a unique vision of Jesus and his mission. According to Paul, the advent of Jesus set in motion a new and more universal stage in the relationship between God and humanity. In the prior stage, Israel was God's messenger to the rest of humanity; in this new stage, there was an opportunity for all of humanity to enter directly into the divine-human covenant through belief in Jesus. In Paul's view, Jesus had appointed him to the special role of apostle to the gentiles, in order to apprise them of their new and direct access to the divine-human covenant. While Jesus' original followers disagreed with this view of his mission, Paul's perspective won out and shaped the subsequent church.

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**3** There is a vast literature on the earliest stages of the Jesus movement, and much of it seeks to identify the stances taken by Jesus toward the rest of Palestinian Jewry. Of this vast literature, I have found the following most helpful: G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981); P. Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991); and E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993).

**4** There is likewise a vast literature on Paul, again with considerable focus on Paul's views of Judaism and Jews. The literature on Paul benefits from a body of sources from Paul himself. Helpful recent perspectives on Paul can be found in: J. G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); and J. D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). Daniel Boyarin's *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) is useful for Boyarin's mastery of the Jewish sources that influenced Paul.

The Pauline perspective refashioned the earlier Jesus movement convictions as to who constituted the correct interpreters of the divine revelation to Israel. In the earlier stage of the movement, one group of Jews—Jesus and his followers—constituted the True Israel; those Jews who rejected Jesus were not the True Israel. The Pauline innovation complicated this straightforward dichotomy. Jews who rejected Jesus remained errant; however, both Jews and gentiles who accepted Jesus were now the True Israel. To be sure, Jews who rejected Jesus were still Israel but only in physical terms. Gentiles who accepted Jesus were not biologically Israel, but more importantly they were spiritual Israel. Thus, what eventually became a largely gentile church was projected as the True Israel, while Jews who continued to reject Jesus and his message were Israel in physical terms only.

This complicated perspective translated into a complex view of Judaism and Jews. On the one hand, the early history of the Jews was projected in very positive terms. God had chosen the Jews for the exalted mission of bringing knowledge of him to humanity. Divine revelation was vouchsafed to this group. On the other hand, many in this group subsequently misread the revelation granted to them and failed to recognize the new stage in human history introduced by Jesus. Indeed, these Jews did more than simply fail to recognize his significance—they actively persecuted him. Thus, a once-noble people reached the depths of error and sin. This error and this sin were punished by God through Roman suppression of the rebellion of 66 C.E., destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, and exile of the Jews from the land promised to them (in fact, exile at the hands of the Romans was a theological construct—it did not take place).<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, Jews would grasp the truth and return to become part of the New and True Israel. What results is classic Christian anti-Judaism, which is a complex combination of veneration for early Israel, denigration of post-Jesus Jewry, and certainty of an eventual reconciliation.

During the first few centuries of the Common Era, Christian attitudes toward Jews and Judaism did not impact Jewish life significantly. The church was expanding rapidly, thanks largely to the Pauline innovation. This rapid growth fueled concern on the part of the Roman authorities, who recurrently initiated persecutions of the movement. Given these persecutions, the young church was hardly in a position to focus attention and energy on the Jews. Moreover, demographically the centers of church expansion and the centers of Jewish life did

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<sup>5</sup> On the realities of suppression of the rebellion of 66–70 C.E. and the lack of an expulsion by the Romans, see R. Chazan, *Refugees or Migrants: Pre-Modern Jewish Population Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), chaps. 4 and 6.

not coincide. Church expansion was concentrated in the western sectors of the Roman Empire, while the centers of Jewish population were in Palestine and Mesopotamia.<sup>6</sup>

This lack of impact changed dramatically with Constantine, the Roman emperor who ended the policy of persecution of the church and subsequently made Christianity the state religion.<sup>7</sup> At this point, the views of the church began to impinge in a significant way on Jewish life. An official church perspective on Judaism and Jews and official church policy vis-à-vis Judaism and Jews were fully articulated by the influential church father Augustine.<sup>8</sup> Augustine considered himself a disciple of Paul and viewed Judaism and the Jews in Pauline fashion. For Augustine, the early history of the Jews was highly distinguished. God chose them as his human partners and blessed them with divine revelation. At a later point, the Jews failed to grasp the obvious meaning of the revelation bestowed upon them, rejected Jesus, and persecuted him. Like Paul, Augustine envisioned eventual reconciliation between God and his original human partners.

This reconstruction of the Jewish past, present, and future led Augustine to propose a three-part policy vis-à-vis Jews: (1) In recognition of their past distinction, Jews are not to be randomly persecuted in Christian societies; (2) in view of their present error, they are to be limited so that they inflict no religious harm on their Christian hosts; (3) Christians bear the obligation of preaching their truth to Jews regularly and sympathetically, in hopes of bringing closer the future return of the Jews to the true faith of Israel.

The Augustinian policy formed the foundation for generally peaceful Jewish existence in the traditional areas of Jewish settlement under Christian control, which for the Roman Church meant the Mediterranean Basin. With the passage of time, the external circumstances of Jewish life evolved markedly, eventually bringing about new stances on Judaism and Jews. The first major change in Jewish circumstances began early in the seventh century, with the birth of Islam and the rapid conquests of the Muslim armies. Islam exhibited none of the harshness we have discerned in Christian-Jewish relations. According to Muhammed, the

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<sup>6</sup> The rich *Adversus Iudaeos* literature is sometimes taken as an indication of considerable Christian-Jewish contact during this period. However, this literature seems largely directed at Christian and not Jewish readers.

<sup>7</sup> This turning point is emphasized by James Carroll in his popular *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews: A History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> On Augustine and his stance toward Judaism and Jews, see J. Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), chap. 1, and P. Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 2008).

one God in the universe granted two prior revelations—one to Jews and one to Christians. He then decided to grant a third and full revelation to a third and different human community. The first two revelations were genuine, albeit incomplete. The fact that there was a third revelation did not mean failure on the part of the Jews and the Christians—this was simply an inscrutable divine decision. Thus, the key complicating elements in Christian views of Judaism and Jews—contention over one and the same divine legacy and failure on the part of the Jews—are absent in Islamic views of Jews and Christians.<sup>9</sup>

As a result of the remarkable Muslim conquests, the overwhelming majority of Jews in the world during the first half of the Middle Ages lived in the sphere of Islam. The Jewish population in Christian areas—meaning eastern and western Christendom—was quite small. Thus, the impact of Christian views on Jewish life was limited. Moreover, the small Jewish population in eastern Christendom and the southern sectors of western Christendom remained in the traditional areas of Jewish settlement, and thus Christian-Jewish relations showed little change from what they had been in late antiquity.

The second major external change in Jewish circumstances involved yet another alteration in the overall patterns of Western life. Beginning about mid-way in the Middle Ages—that is to say toward the end of the first millennium, western Christendom transformed itself from the weakest of the medieval religio-political power blocs into the strongest. By the year 1500, western Christendom had become the dominant force in the West, and its dominance would in fact grow over the course of the early modern and modern centuries.<sup>10</sup> This new-found power in western Christendom was largely the result of the vitalization of the heretofore backward and unproductive areas of northern Europe—the areas that stretched from England in the west through northern France, Germany, and Poland in the east.

Down through the end of the first millennium, northern Europe was an under-populated and under-developed area of western Christendom. For reasons that are not at all clear, at the turn of the millennium northern Europe began to progress dramatically. Beginning slowly and unremarkably at the end of the first millennium, the backward areas of northern Europe began to develop in every respect: The population grew; arable land expanded; trade and industry devel-

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<sup>9</sup> For authoritative descriptions of the Islamic stance toward Judaism and Jews, see S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts through the Ages* (New York: Schocken, 1955), and B. Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> For two outstanding analyses of this vitalization, see R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), and J. Fried, *The Middle Ages*, trans. P. Lewis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

oped; cities emerged out of villages; governance became increasingly effective; the institutions of religion and culture became better organized and more creative. A robust and relatively homogeneous civilization emerged across northern Europe, with its most powerful centers located in the western sectors of the north, with somewhat less mature centers in the middle sectors of the north, and with the eastern sectors lagging behind.

The vitalization of northern Europe had enormous impact on the history of the Jews, in ways not sufficiently acknowledged. As a result of this process, a sector of the world devoid of Jews quietly attracted a few early Jewish immigrants and then increasing numbers of Jewish settlers. Despite significant obstacles, this growing community of Jews took advantage of the remarkable developments occurring across northern Europe, contributed significantly to these developments, multiplied, and slowly emerged as the world's largest, most productive, and dominant Jewry.<sup>11</sup> One of the results of the development of this new center of Jewish life was the emergence of new and baneful imagery of Judaism and Jews. In effect, the anti-Judaism of late antiquity evolved under these new circumstances into what emerged as a set of radically new negative stereotypes of Judaism and Jews that would become the foundations of modern antisemitism.<sup>12</sup>

The emergence and growth of northern-European Jewry was hardly an easy process. Northern Europe was a sector of the West in which the Jews were previously unknown. None of the familiarity that softened the growing size and centrality of the Jews of the Islamic sphere was in evidence across northern Europe. Instead, northern Europe was an area emerging fitfully from backwardness, an area dominated by the Roman Church, an area unaccustomed to religious diversity, an area undergoing rapid change with the resistance to change that often develops in such circumstances.

Jews came into this young society as a disruptive element. They were first and foremost newcomers, and newcomers are never enthusiastically welcomed into new societal settings. These newcomers were prized by the ruling authorities for the economic stimulation they might provide. However, this economic stimulation involved innovation and thus once again evoked resentment in many sectors of society that were resistant to change. Yet worse, these newcomers dissented from the Christian faith of the majority; indeed they were the descendants

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**11** In an overview of the history of the Jews in medieval Christian Europe, I have emphasized the differences between the older Jewry of southern Europe and the newer Jewry of northern Europe. See R. Chazan, *The Jews of Medieval Western Christendom, 1000–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

**12** See Chazan, *From Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism*.

of those depicted in the Gospels as the enemies of Jesus. For all these reasons, the Jewish immigrants were widely viewed with disfavor—often intense disfavor—and regularly encountered resistance. That the Jewish population of northern Europe could continue to grow despite this resistance is a tribute to the vitality and attraction of this rapidly developing area and to the resourcefulness of its new Jewish population.

The initial resistance to the new Jewish settlers limited their economic diversification. Most of them came as traders, and few further options emerged for them. A curious development in the early twelfth century opened up a new and problematic economic opportunity for these Jews. As western Christendom and especially its northern sectors underwent rapid development, the increasingly powerful Roman Church began to agitate for observance of long-neglected prohibitions. One of these involved Christians taking usury from fellow Christians.<sup>13</sup> Since flow of capital was critically important in rapidly developing northern Europe, the church's successes in this anti-usury initiative opened the way for Jewish specialization in moneylending. This new economic outlet was critical to maintaining the flow of capital across the north and to expanding Jewish presence in northern Europe. At the same time, it served to deepen popular animosity. While human societies recognize that banking and exchange of capital are critical to all economies, the people engaged in this activity are never popular. Jewish moneylending became yet another element in the increasingly negative imagery of northern Europe's Jews.

As we have seen, traditional Christian anti-Judaism projected the possibility of deleterious Jewish religious impact, and Augustinian policy insisted on limitation of this potential negative impact as one of the pillars of Christian policy vis-à-vis Jews. Moreover, the Gospel imagery of the Jewish opponents of Jesus deepened the perceptions of Jewish religious hostility to Christianity and Christians. In the new Jewish settlement area of northern Europe, perceptions of potential Jewish harmfulness were expanded far beyond the religious sphere. Potentially negative Jewish impacts on the Christian majority were perceived as extending into wide-ranging facets of societal life. To an extent, these perceptions were rooted in the realities of Jewish life. At the simplest level, Jews were agents of change. It is for this reason that they were supported by ruling authorities intent on fostering economic change and growth. Nonetheless, agents of change are never popular with certain strata of society, and so it was with the

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<sup>13</sup> The biblical source for this prohibition is Deuteronomy 23:20–21, which distinguishes between taking interest from a countryman, which is forbidden, and taking interest from a foreigner, which is permitted.

new Jews of northern Europe. Moreover, the new Jewish specialization in money-lending—also supported by the authorities—exacerbated the sense of Jewish societal harmfulness.

Out of this expanded sense of potential Jewish harmfulness emerged a series of new, extreme, and highly damaging stereotypes of Jewish hatred of and malevolence toward Christianity and Christians.<sup>14</sup> Jews traditionally perceived as religiously harmful and then in northern Europe as economically harmful, initially as a result of their involvement in economic change and subsequently as a result of their moneylending, were slowly perceived as deeply hostile and malevolent toward their Christian neighbors and moved to inflict devastating physical damage on these Christian neighbors whenever and wherever possible.

The initial form of this new perception was an alleged tendency on the part of Jews to murder groundlessly Christian contemporaries. Murder out of conflict of many kinds is lamentable but understandable and appears in all societies. However, the new sense that emerged in mid-twelfth-century northern Europe was that Jews killed Christian contemporaries without any specific grievance. Rather, it was simply hatred of all Christians that moved individual Jews to kill individual Christians. The groundlessness of these killings was emphasized by identifying the victims as children, who could not have done sufficient harm to their Jewish killers to warrant violence. A number of claims of groundless killing of Christian youngsters surfaced across northern Europe during the second half of the twelfth century.<sup>15</sup>

This sense of gratuitous Jewish murder was quickly embellished with religious motifs. The first such embellishment emerged in the English town of Norwich during the middle of the twelfth century. The Norwich chronicler Thomas of Monmouth claimed that eyewitness accounts of the murder of the saintly lad William indicated that the malevolent Jews took the youngster's life by crucifying him, in effect reenacting their historic crime.<sup>16</sup> Thus the groundless murder of William was made yet more heinous by the form it took. Subsequently, the notion of murder in a ritualized format shifted from the allegation of Easter-related crucifixion to the Passover-related claim that Jews utilized the blood of

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<sup>14</sup> See especially the works of Langmuir and Chazan cited above in n. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Chazan, *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Antisemitism*, chap. 4.

<sup>16</sup> See the classic study by G. I. Langmuir, "Thomas of Monmouth: Detector of Ritual Murder," *Speculum* 59 (1984): 822–46, reprinted in Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*, 209–36.

their Christian victims for Jewish holiday rituals. This powerful motif became a staple of anti-Jewish imagery down to the present.<sup>17</sup>

The notions of implacable Jewish hatred of Christians and the commitment of Jews to harming their Christian contemporaries took further forms, most notably the allegation of poisoning the wells of Europe in order to murder Christian neighbors. When in 1348–1349 Europe was devastated by the spread of the bubonic plague, Jews suffered the ravages of the plague along with everyone else. At the same time, in many places Jews were accused of creating the devastation by poisoning the water supply, and in some places these allegations resulted in popular massacres of Jews.

Traditional Christian anti-Judaism clearly played a role in these new medieval anti-Jewish calumnies, spawned initially in the areas of northern Europe where Jewish presence was new and resented. As we have seen, one of the sources of this resentment was Jewish deviation from the fundamentally Christian nature of the northern-European population. The notion of the murder of William of Norwich involving crucifixion and the later claim that Jews—via their moneylending—gained control of host wafers and subjected them to abuse all bespeak the impact of Christian thinking.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, these new medieval calumnies clearly went far beyond traditional Christian anti-Judaism. Indeed, as these slanders emerged and spread, major church leaders regularly took a principled stance against them. For example, when the notion of Jewish ritual use of Christian blood emerged in the early thirteenth century, a series of popes denounced the claim and convened Christian experts in Jewish law to prove that the alleged Jewish behaviors were unthinkable.<sup>19</sup> These new medieval allegations went far beyond traditional Christian anti-Judaism and in fact elicited church condemnation.

The new medieval slanders—grounded to an extent in traditional church thinking but extending far beyond that traditional thinking—were eventually absorbed into Western popular culture and played a significant role in the modern

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<sup>17</sup> See A. Dundes, ed., *The Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

<sup>18</sup> See M. Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> Note the reaction of Pope Innocent IV to the emergence of the blood libel accusation in the late 1240s—see S. Grayzel and K. R. Stow's two volumes on *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century* (Philadelphia and New York: Dropsie College and Jewish Theological Seminary, 1933–1989), esp. 1:113–14, 262–67. Shortly thereafter, Pope Innocent IV added a new paragraph to the traditional *Constitutio pro Judeis*, prohibiting acceptance of the new allegation, see *ibid.*, 1:118, 274–75.



racist antisemitism that resulted in the murder of millions of Jews during the twentieth century. Traditional Christian anti-Judaism laid a foundation for modern antisemitism; this traditional Christian anti-Judaism was expanded in new and radical directions in the innovative circumstances of medieval Christian Europe. These new and radical directions constituted the more immediate backdrop to the extreme anti-Jewish imagery of modern antisemitism, which developed in much the same European areas that had spawned the more radical medieval anti-Jewish canards.

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Kerstin Mayerhofer

# Inferiority Embodied: The ‘Men-struating’ Jew and Pre-Modern Notions of Identity and Difference

The generation and tradition of cultural narratives is one of the bases in the process of formation of identity. During the Christian Middle Ages, starting with Augustine’s doctrine on the Jews, the so-called “hermeneutical Jew” was fashioned—a figure that assumed distinctive character, bodily characteristics, and narrative significance in Christian thought and culture.<sup>1</sup> In dealing with the specific traits of this hermeneutical Jew, Christians sought to strengthen their own core beliefs and values, which they thought superior to their Jewish ‘Others.’ Narratives of Jewish false understanding of the Scripture, of their customs, or of ritual murder were discussed and disputed widely. These narratives convey larger discourses on Jewish hereditary inferiority vis-à-vis Christian spiritual and socio-cultural superiority. Various motifs support these narratives, from the Jew’s stubbornness and blindness to uncover the Scripture’s true and ultimate meaning, their economic wickedness as usurers and money-lenders, to the repeated claim of Jewish usage of Christian blood for magical practice.

The discourse of Jewish inferiority manifests itself also in a second category of narratives and motifs that focus on the ‘Jewish body.’ Following Paul’s depiction of the Jews as carnal and in sharp contrast to the new and spiritually advanced Christian who could free himself from fleshly desires in his covenant with Christ, the Jews’ bodies were claimed to differ fundamentally from the bodies of Christians. They were marked by weakness and pallor, were diseased and distorted, especially with regards to their sex and gender. All of these somatic markers were considered a reflection of the Jews’ spiritual impurity and inferiority. Pre-modern narratives and motifs surrounding the ‘Jewish body’ can be interpreted as transmitting a notion of religious identity and difference that is not solely rooted in culture. Rather, they point to the formation of proto-racial concepts of identity, which equated particular kinds of religious belief with particular kinds of bodies.<sup>2</sup> One of the motifs in this canon is the “men-struating”<sup>3</sup> Jew—

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1 Cf. J. Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 10–19.

2 This article uses the terms “proto-racial” and “proto-racist” following the example of M. L. Kaplan, *Figuring Racism in Medieval Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019). The terms are used as a delineation from the modern understanding of race and racism often

a notion of a regular flow of blood that Jews were considered to be afflicted with, marking their religious, social, and somatic difference.

The motif of Jewish ‘male menstruation’ was established and shaped during the twelfth and thirteenth century. Until the early sixteenth century, these voices were usually clerical, discussing the very idea of the ‘men-struating’ Jew. However, already in the fourteenth century, contemporary medical knowledge and scientific findings had brought forth a first somehow ‘scientific’ discussion of Jewish ‘male menstruation.’ The ‘men-struating’ Jew left his purely figurative context and the doctrine of spiritual inferiority embodied in this figure subsequently translated into social and legal spheres. The most prominent example can be found in the establishment of the concept of “purity of blood”<sup>4</sup> at the Iberian Peninsula. Forced conversions of Jews (and Muslims) in Reconquista Spain took place since the middle of the thirteenth century and intensified in

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connected to the history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and to the notion of biological differences between groups of people. Often times it is considered anachronistic to use the terms “race” and “racism” when dealing with pre-modern sources and histories, based on the claim that the pre-modern understanding of diversity was rooted in culture rather than in nature. In order to avoid this contradiction, the usage of “proto-racial” and “proto-racist” is suitable as it still acknowledges the fact that, indeed, ancient and pre-modern racism is not solely a cultural concept. The present article operates with a definition of racism and race that draws on the creation of a hierarchy between groups as its constitutional element. According to this definition, we can speak of racism and defining races whenever one group represents itself as superior to another group of people. This hierarchy is persistent as is the claim of subordination grounded in it. Other features, however, such as somatic markers or permanence of physiological and cultural traits of identity, might vary. B. Isaac has shown that the defining element of ancient and pre-modern understandings of racial difference, rooted both in religion and nature, however, is the postulation of superiority and inferiority in relation to one another. Cf. B. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1–52. Proto-racial distinctions can function both with and without biological references and notions about culture and nature do often intersect. According to A. Loomba, religion and theological doctrine, too, have always played a central role in the proto-racist formation of identity based on hierarchy. Cf. A. Loomba, “Race and the Possibilities of Comparative Critique,” *New Literary History* 40, no. 3 (2009): 501–22. Isaac’s and Loomba’s theories on pre-modern constructions of race and on pre-modern racism and their continuation by Kaplan lie at the core of this article. The same theories apply to gender as a pre-modern category of determination and identity and both categories, race and gender, do strongly intersect in the figure of the ‘men-struating’ Jew. **3** The term “men-struation” was coined by Gloria Steinem in her famous essay “If Men Could Menstruate,” in *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions* (New York: New American Library, 1983).

**4** Cf. M. Diemling, “‘Mit Leib und Seele?’ Überlegungen zum Körperbild jüdischer Konvertiten in der Frühen Neuzeit,” *Aschkenas* 15, no. 2 (2006): 411.

the violence of 1391.<sup>5</sup> The large number of “*conversos*” or “New Christians,” as the Jewish converts were called, led to a belief that Jews were insincere in their conversion, and pressed for a delineation of boundaries between ‘Old’ and ‘New Christians.’

In this article, I trace the Christian concept of Jewish hereditary inferiority mapped onto the Jews’ bodies using the example of the ‘men-struating’ Jew. I demonstrate how religion, physiology, sex, and gender as categories of social determination intersect to create a notion of identity and difference, which can be regarded as proto-racial. To do so, I will scrutinise the image of a bleeding Jewish man with regards to the formation of a larger motif of Jewish ‘male menstruation’ in sources from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century from theological, medical, and political backgrounds.

## What is Jewish ‘Male Menstruation’?

A corpus of texts from the twelfth to the fifteenth century describes a male Jew suffering from a spontaneous and anomalous bleeding that reappears at regular intervals. The bleeding is neither the result of injury nor of a chronic illness. If physiological details are provided, they usually refer to the bleeding’s source in the genital or anal region. Most of the sources associate this regular bleeding in Jewish men with menstruation and use a broad vocabulary and imagery to frame this notion. The association itself can be both explicit, by referring back to women or the biological process of menstruation, and implicit, by alluding to religio-cultural understandings of sex and gender.

The term Jewish ‘male menstruation’ itself was coined by Salo W. Baron (1895–1989). In his magnum opus *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, he addressed the account of a ‘men-struating’ Jew by the Dominican Thomas de Cantimpré (1201–1270/2).<sup>6</sup> Baron concluded that “few of Thomas’ readers doubted the existence of such a Jewish malady often appearing as a sort of

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<sup>5</sup> Jews on the Iberian Peninsula had experienced compulsory or forced conversions already under Visigothic rule in the fifth century. P. Fredriksen’s article in the present volume suggests that a notion of the Jews as an inferior ‘race’ is already established in Visigothic canon law which had never fully accepted Jewish converts who, as a result, would always rank on a lower legal and social level than “gothic” Christians. Cf. P. Fredriksen, “Divinity, Ethnicity, Identity: ‘Religion’ as a Political Category in Christian Antiquity,” 101–20 of the present volume.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Thomas Cantimpré, *Bonum Universale De Apibus*, ed. G. Colvenere (Douai: Baltazar Beller, 1627), II, 29.

male menstruation [...].”<sup>7</sup> Thomas indeed reports of the spontaneous effusion of blood from a Jew’s body that he traces back to a “vein of evildoing,” a “congenital defect in the blood.”<sup>8</sup> He established a genealogy of impurity associated with the Jews’ alleged responsibility for the killing of Christ. According to Thomas, all Jews are “tormented importunately by this [blood] flow without expiation.”<sup>9</sup> The term ‘male menstruation,’ however, does not appear in the original source. Thomas only speaks of a “macula sanguinis” (“stain of blood”) without reference to (female) menstruation.

Other sources provide us with a more distinct image. An anonymous treatise titled *Tractatus de locis et statu sancte terre ierosolimitane*<sup>10</sup> mentions a “fluxus sanguinis” in Jewish men, which appears “singulis lunationibus”—“with every [changing of the] moon.”<sup>11</sup> What the text must have in mind here is indeed female menses, which is linguistically linked both to month (lat. *mensis*) and moon (gr. *mēnē*). It draws on ancient medical theory that linked the female menstrual cycle with the lunar cycle.<sup>12</sup> What is especially important with regards to

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7 S. W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 11:153.

8 M. L. Kaplan, “‘His Blood Be on Us and on Our Children’: Medieval Theology and the Demise of Jewish Somatic Inferiority in Early Modern England,” in *The Cultural Politics of Blood, 1500–1900*, ed. K. A. Coles et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 109.

9 Cited from I. M. Resnick, “Cruentation, Medieval Anti-Jewish Polemic, and Ritual Murder,” *Antisemitism Studies* 3, no. 1 (2019): 104. The Latin original reads: “[...] ex maledictione parentum [referring here to Matt 27:25 and the blood curse] currat adhuc in filios vena facinoris, per macula sanguinis; ut per hanc importune fluidam proles impia inexpiabiliter crucietur, quousque se ream sanguinis Christi recognoscat poenitens, et sanetur,” *ibid.*, 120–21.

10 Cf. B. Z. Kedar, “The *Tractatus de locis et statu sancte terre ierosolimitane*,” in *The Crusades and Their Sources: Essays Presented to Bernard Hamilton*, ed. J. France and W. G. Zajac (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 111–34.

11 “*Tractatus de locis*,” app. 1, *De Iudeis*: “Quorum primi sunt Judei, homines obstinati, plusquam mulieres imbelles, ubique servi, singulis lunationibus fluxum sanguinis patientes,” ed. Kedar, 130. Translation: “Like this, however, are the Jews, obstinate men, unwarlike, even more than women, everywhere servants, with any [rise of the new] moon suffering from a flux of blood.” Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine. Cf. also Jacques de Vitry, *Historia Orientalis*, 82.160: “Imbelles enim et imbecilles facti sunt quasi mulieres. Unde singulis lunationibus, ut dicitur, fluxum sanguinis patiuntur,” ed. Donnadieu, 328. Translation by I. M. Resnick, *On Roots of the Myth of Jewish Male Menses in Jacques de Vitry’s History of Jerusalem* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan-University Press, 1998), 22: “They are unwarlike and weak weak even as women, and it is said that they have a flux of blood every month,”

12 Cf. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* 11.140: “The menstrual flow is a woman’s superfluous blood: it is termed ‘menstrual,’ *menstrua*, because of the phase of the light of the moon by which this flow comes about. The moon is called *MENE* in Greek.” Translation by W. D. Sharpe

the *Tractatus de locis* is the fact that this text has generally been considered to be the oldest mention of Jewish 'male menstruation,' dating roughly to 1170. Even though we encounter the Jewish "fluxus sanguinis" in different varieties in the various sources, the *Tractatus de locis* and its transmission by Jacques de Vitry, which we shall turn to later, contributed largely to the conceptualisation of the Jewish blood flow as a sort of 'male menstruation,' especially in modern scholarship.

Yet, even when a medieval source uses the term 'menstruation,' we cannot be sure what the authors really wanted to denote with this term. Menstruation as a vaginal discharge, following a fixed cycle during the fertile lifespan of an individual with respective reproductive organs (specifically the uterus and ovaries)—this pragmatic picture is certainly not what the contemporary authors had in mind when attributing some sort of 'menstrual' bleeding to a Jewish man. However, taboos surrounding the biological process of menstruation and the menstrual cycle were important in conveying the meaning of some authors who used the term.<sup>13</sup> With regards to these issues, throughout this article, the idiom Jewish 'male menstruation' and the 'men-struating' Jew will be applied

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in *Isidore of Seville: The Medical Writings*, ed. W. D. Sharpe (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1964), 48.

**13** A variety of taboos surround blood and, especially, menstrual blood. The most common misogynist stigmas concerning menstruation are known from Pliny the Elder, "Remarkable Circumstances Connected with the Menstrual Discharge," in *Natural History*, ch.13, 2151–2. Among other taboos, Pliny claimed sexual intercourse with a woman would produce stillborn, sick, or otherwise monstrous offspring. This notion lies behind commonly known blood taboos in both Jewish and Christian religious law. Both forbid sexual relations with a menstruant and understand menstruation itself as one of the ten curses of Eve. This led to an increased marginalisation of the menstruant regulated in the Mishna and Talmud's *Niddah* laws, rendering the menstruant unclean and impure for a specific timeframe before, during, and after the bleeding. Church fathers like Jerome perpetuated the Talmudic laws and subsequently banned menstruants from participation on church services. Cf. Jerome, "Against Helvidius," in *Saint Jerome: Dogmatic and Polemical Works*, vol. 53 of *The Fathers of the Church*, ed. J. N. Hritz (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1965); Theodore of Canterbury, *The Penitential of Theodore and the Iudicia Theodori*, ed. T. Charles-Edwards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Even today, menstrual taboos are exploited as the main causes for the exclusion of women from religious positions of authority in both Judaism and (Catholic) Christianity. In addition, pre-modern medical texts emphasised the notion of *menstruosity*, that is, a body's ability to menstruate, in comparison with *monstrosity*, that is, the production of a defective child. Menstrual blood played a central, yet passive, role in conception and gestation, and any imperfection in a human being was traced back to the defect of menstrual blood and thus, ultimately, to the imperfection of the menstruant altogether. Cf. J. Cadden, "'Just Like a Woman': Passivity, Defect, and Insatiability," in *Nothing Natural Is Shameful: Sodomy and Science in Late Medieval Europe* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 122–28.



as technical terms only (and are thus always put in quotation marks). Further technical terms or terminology that has been coined in early modern or modern scholarship (e.g., “biology”) without, terminologically, linking to the pre-modern times, will be marked similarly.

We can understand the various manifestations of Jewish ‘male menstruation’ in pre-modern sources within the context of literary narrative and as parts of literary motif. A motif as the “minimal thematic unit”<sup>14</sup> of a text is characterised by repetitious intratextual and intertextual recurrence. It conveys a larger theme that is mostly abstract and implicit in the more concrete figurative motif. Focusing on the identification and analysis of motifs assists our interpretation of a work as they point to a motivation, intention, or meaning outside of the text itself. For our corpus of sources, the image of a bleeding Jewish man supports the motif of Jewish ‘male menstruation.’ This, in turn, contributes to the theme of Jewish ‘Otherness,’ a deviation from Christian normative morality and physicality that manifests itself in the aberration of the ‘Jewish’ body.

The theme of the ‘Jewish body,’ in turn, can be interpreted within the narrative context of the individual human body as a symbol for a larger bound unit like a religious or cultural community.<sup>15</sup> Corporeal images and constructions are useful means for the representation of social or religious values. The Jews are not part of the Christian communal body, which is bound together by rituals and shared hope for salvation. Figuratively, they were represented with lewdness, sickly pallor, timidity, melancholy, and a bleeding ailment, all of which helped to shape the ‘Jewish body’ which differs significantly from the Christian body. As menstruants were generally believed to be uncontrollable and their bodies unbound,<sup>16</sup> the hermeneutical ‘men-struating’ Jew too had to be pushed to the margins of Christian society and could not be a member of a spiritual communal Christian body. Jewish ‘male menstruation’ thus serves as a marker for alterity and inferiority inscribed into the Jewish body. Lastly, it alludes to many more cultural narratives surrounding the body, gender, and sexuality promoted by the importance of blood. The ‘men-struating’ Jew crosses two borders alike—between male and female as well as between Jew and non-Jew. Both Jews and

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14 G. Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 55.

15 Cf. M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concept[s] of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2002), 141–59.

16 Cf. e.g. B. Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006); idem, “Blood, Jews and Monsters in Medieval Culture,” in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, ed. B. Bildhauer and R. Millis (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 75–97; and idem, “Medieval European Conceptions of Blood: Truth and Human Integrity: Medieval European Conceptions of Blood,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19 (2013): 57–76.

women are considered inferior when measured against a discursive and normative image of humankind being Christian and male.

The category of gender is entwined with a proto-racial understanding of difference in the 'men-struating' Jew. Both female menstruation and Jewish 'male menstruation' are considered the result of divine punishment following an original spiritual misdeed or sin. As such, they are transmitted from generation to generation. Their inherited character becomes both congenital, indicated in its 'biology,' and genealogical. The 'biological' nature of the bleeding as well as its cultural foundation conflate and result into the idea of spiritual inferiority inscribed in the body. As such they are used as reasoning and reinforcement of social oppression and political discrimination. Jews and women alike could thus not fit into their societal order and had to be subordinate. Motifs like Jewish 'male menstruation' support the legal curtailment of the Jews' social status exerted by both church and secular authorities.

## Foundations for and Perceptions of the 'Men-Struating' Jew

We encounter the 'men-struating' Jew in sources of four different genre groups: sermon collections and *exempla*, medical texts, natural philosophical treatises, and historiographical and hagiographical material. Representations of Jewish 'male menstruation' are mostly connected to a source's generic intention and use varying imagery.<sup>17</sup> Terminology, that is, how the motif of Jewish 'male menstruation' is verbalised, too, varies accordingly. Some sources use more implicit terminology and abstract images, as we have encountered in Thomas de Cantimpré's *Bonum Universale de Apibus*. Other texts use vague vocabulary, albeit evoke clear images when juxtaposing the description of Jews with the image of a weak woman, therein marking a moment of clear feminisation, as, for example, in the *Tractatus de Locis*. Later sources express the notion of a 'men-struating' Jew more openly and describe Jews as "menstruosi [...] quam mulieres,"<sup>18</sup> ("menstruous [...] like women") or claim that "omnes homines

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<sup>17</sup> This observation is based on S. Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), who argues that genre is inextricably linked with assumptions about gender. The same can be assumed about the representation of the 'men-struating' Jew in our corpus sources.

<sup>18</sup> "The Computus Iudaicus of 1342," in *Medieval Latin Christian Texts on the Jewish Calendar: A Study with Five Editions and Translations*, ed. C. P. E. Nothaft (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 427.

Iudei ut mulieres menstrua patiuntur”<sup>19</sup> (“all Jewish men, like women, suffer from menstruation”). Especially the sources stemming from a more ‘scientific’ background, medical and natural philosophical treatises alike, established the notion of a permanence of ‘Otherness’ through the continuity of the body.

All of the sources, including ‘scientific’ ones, are influenced by contemporary Christian theology and doctrine. The mention of the ‘men-struating’ Jew is inextricably linked to an exegesis of the so-called “blood curse” from the Gospel of Matthew. The phrase “His blood be on us and on our children,”<sup>20</sup> in Matt 27:25, alludes to the Jews’ willingness to accept liability for Jesus’ death. It is this scriptural passage that serves as foundation for linking the Jew’s sinfulness with the symbol of blood—as the Jews had spilled Christ’s blood, they were now afflicted with a bleeding from their bodies in return. In referencing those Jews present at the crucifixion, the notion of the hereditary nature of the bleeding as well as of genealogical guilt is emphasised. The understanding of the bleeding as shameful and humiliating is amplified in a subsequent exegesis of Matt 27:25 in reference to Ps 78:66. Many sources cite Ps 78:66 [Vulgate 77:66] and the account of God’s punishment of the Philistines with some sort of anal disease verbatim: “et percussit hostes suos retrorsum obprobrium sempiternum dedit eos”—“And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts: he put them to a perpetual reproach.” This passage, in turn, has previously often been read in light of 1 Sam 5:6, and the mentioned disease in Ps 78:66 is often interpreted as bleeding haemorrhoids.<sup>21</sup> Subsequent varieties of the motif of Jewish ‘male menstruation,’ evoking images of bleeding haemorrhoids, take their basis in this specific reading of Matt 27:25. Regardless of the number of scriptural passages used as spiritual proof-texts, all sources conclude that Jewish ‘male menstruation’ is the result of divine punishment in vengeance for the passion of Christ. The bleeding, however it may be specified, is considered congenital and “brought on by the Jews’ participation in the crucifixion, as the source of the bleeding disease.”<sup>22</sup> In the further course, it is regarded as the source of the Jews’ physical

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**19** Cecco d’Ascoli, “Cicchi esculani viri clarissimi in Spheram Mundi enarratio,” in *The Sphere of Sacrobosco and Its Commentators*, ed. L. Thorndike (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 409.

**20** Unless otherwise stated, all English translations are from KJV.

**21** 1 Sam 5:6 (KJV): “But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, *even* Ashdod and the coasts thereof.” While the Hebrew עֲפָלִים (‘ofalim) simply means something growing where it shouldn’t, for example, a lump or a tumour, most passages in the Hebrew Bible using the term are commonly read as referring to haemorrhoids (throughout 1 Sam and in Deut 28:27).

**22** Kaplan, “‘His Blood Be on Us and on Our Children,’” 109.

weakness,<sup>23</sup> their sickly pallor,<sup>24</sup> and specific 'Jewish' ailments such as dysentery and dropsy, all of which are equally shameful.

Images like these underline pre-modern proto-racist notions of difference. Particular faiths are equated with particular somatic attributes and both are associated with distinct moral qualities. While the qualities of faith are hidden inside and unseen, somatic markers help to render them visible. In the case of the 'men-struating' Jew, a discourse of hereditary guilt and genealogical inferiority is embodied in a physiological process that, as such, too, is considered humiliating, shameful, and impure. The repetition of particular motifs and stereotypes reinforced the theme of the Jews as misguided enemies to good Christians. Body-related motifs, such as Jewish 'male menstruation,' aimed at emphasising the Jews' carnality in contrast to the spiritually disembodied Christian. The moment of feminisation, manifested in the equation of the Jewish "fluxus sanguinis" with (female) menstruation also played a key role: the Jewish male appears as uncontrollable and melancholic, unfit to exert his male authority hence subordinate—like women. The 'men-struating' Jew serves as a hermeneutical figure embodying discourses of ungodliness as well as of spiritual and societal inferiority.

In the following, I turn to two pre-modern sources from both a clerical and a medical background. Both of these were known and used widely and had multiple translations and reprints way into the modern times. They promote two different varieties of the motif of Jewish 'male menstruation,' which, as we shall see, resonate largely with their genres. Both sources, however, also help us to understand how various notions surrounding the 'men-struating' Jew, both on a theological and a 'scientific' level, intersected to fit a larger narrative frame and support the proto-racial discourse of hereditary inferiority. Taking a look onto early modern sources from the Iberian Peninsula as a third example will document the translation of this doctrine into social and legal spheres. All of these sources demonstrate how the proto-racial notion of difference manifested in the 'men-struating' Jew is shaped using three ideological mechanisms: (theological) universalisation, ('scientific') naturalisation, and (socio-political) normalisation.

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**23** Cf. Caesarius Heisterbacensis, *Caesarii Heisterbacensis monachi ordinis Cisterciensis dialogus miraculorum*, *Distinctio Secunda*, capitulum XXIII (II: 23), ed. J. Strange (Cologne: Sumptibus J. M. Heberle, 1851), 1:92.

**24** Cf. Hugo Cardinalis, *Repertorium apostillarum utriusque testamenti domini Hugonis Cardinalis* (Basel: Ioannes Amerbachius, Ioannes petri & Ioannes froben, 1504), 2:187v.

## Universalisation: Jacques de Vitry's *History of the East* (1216 – 1221)

The idea of the ‘men-struating’ Jew is best known from a mid-thirteenth century source by French Dominican and later Bishop of Acre Jacques de Vitry (c. 1160/70 – 1240). Jacques de Vitry has been described as “one of the great medieval cultural historians,”<sup>25</sup> and played a crucial role in reporting about the crusades to the Holy Land, as well as on religious trends in Europe. His *Abbreviated History of Jerusalem* (*Historia Hierosolimitana abbreviata*) was commissioned by Pope Innocent III aiming at an account of the progress of the Fifth Crusade and an overall historiography of the Holy Land. Originally intended as a tripartite work, Jacques managed to finish only two volumes, the *History of the West* (*Historia Occidentalis*) and the *History of the East* (*Historia Orientalis*). The widespread dissemination and reception of the *History of the East* was a response to the large demand for information about the East. In offering detailed descriptions of the foreign lands, peoples, their rituals and wonders, Jacques satisfied his readers’ curiosity concerning ‘Others.’ His work also served a reconfirmation of his readers’ own Christian or regional identity, with his “descriptions of deviant rites and doctrines to reaffirm their [sc. the Christian readers’] own identity as orthodox Latin Christians or to compare with domestic heresies against which crusades were often waged.”<sup>26</sup>

In books *HOr* 74–83, Jacques deals at length with all different peoples living and dwelling in the Holy Land, starting with the various Christian denominations (*HOr* 74–81) and concluding with the non-Christians and “other Jewish people who are dispersed in all lands of the world”<sup>27</sup> (*HOr* 82). These Jews were descendants of the people present at Christ’s crucifixion who had taken the liability for his death as Matthew claims in his account of the scene. These, according to Jacques de Vitry, would have consequently lost their “appetite for combat” and would have become “weak and faint like women” as well as being “afflicted with a loss of blood” at every changing of the moon:

Finally, there are other Jews, the descendants of those who have cried out “His blood be upon us and upon our children!” [...] They are unwarlike and weak even as women, and it is said that they have a flux of blood every month. God has smitten them in their hinder

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25 J. F. Hinnebusch, *The Historia Occidentalis of Jacques de Vitry* (Fribourg: University Press, 1972), 11.

26 *Ibid.*, 59.

27 Jacques de Vitry, *Historia Orientalis*, ed. J. Donnadieu (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 82, 324.

parts [Ps 78:66], and put them to perpetual opprobrium. After they slew their true brother, Abel, they were made wanderers and fugitives over the earth, cursed like Cain, with a trembling head, that is, a quaking heart, fearing both day and night, not believing in his life. (*HOr* 82, 160)<sup>28</sup>

We can see from this passage why Jacques’ claim lies at the core of the notion of Jewish ‘male menstruation,’ documenting a clear conflation of theology and medicine, which shapes the image of ‘the Jew’ as inherently different from the predominantly Christian male majority society. It is necessary for Jacques to add that the Jewish “fluxus sanguinis” occurs monthly, like in women. Therein, he firmly establishes the connection between a particular Jewish ailment and a general physiological condition associated with the female. Evoking all the stereotypes surrounding menstruation, such as uncontrollability, physical and mental weakness, and general sinfulness resulting from Eve’s original misdeed, serves as a widely accepted theological foundation for Jacques’ further explications. By bringing into context not only Ps 78:66 but also Cain and Abel (Gen 4:15), Jacques clears up any doubts that the regular Jewish blood flow, like menstruation, is a divine punishment. As the Jews had spilled Christ’s blood (who, typologically, is often represented by the figure of Abel), they were now condemned to suffering the regular loss of blood. All of the mentioned somatic details—the bleeding’s monthly periodicity, its link to divine punishment, and Cain’s restless wandering “with a trembling head”—corroborate the image of feminised and, thus, spiritually and physiologically inferior Jew. His feminine traits, both physiological and psychological with the reference to faintness and melancholia in the image of Cain’s trembling head, push the Jew into a gender grey zone at the margins of Christian society. His spiritual inferiority and general ‘Otherness’ had become visible.

Jacques’ is the only thirteenth-century description of a bleeding that recurs monthly and is linked to the lunar cycle. The popularity of his text helped convey the image of a feminised Jew. The most influential source to follow Jacques de Vitry’s depiction is the Dominican Thomas de Cantimpré’s *Bonum Universale*

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<sup>28</sup> Cited in Resnick, *On Roots*, 22. The original reads: “Alii autem Iudaei de quibus patres eorum clamaverunt: *Sanguis eius super nos et super filios nostros* [. . .] Imbelles enim et imbecilles facti sunt quasi mulieres. Unde singulis lunationibus, ut dicitur, fluxum sanguinis patiuntur. Percussit enim eos Deus in posteriora et opprobrium sempiternum dedit illis. Postquam enim fratrem suum, verum Abel, occiderunt, facti sunt vagi et profugi super terram sicut maledictus Cain, habentes caput tremulum, id est cor pavidum, die ac nocte timentes et vite suae non credentes.” Jacques de Vitry, *Historia Orientalis*, 328.

*de Apibus*.<sup>29</sup> For Jacques too, the Jews' bodily abjection is of divine origin, however, it is the analogy to the bleeding of *female* bodies which promotes a notion of impurity and shamefulness. In Christian understanding of the time, 'female' served as much as a hermeneutical category of determination as 'Jew' did. Scholastic and patristic literature had shaped a notion of women using a number of ideological mechanisms. Stereotypical traits like fragility and fickleness were attributed to the female supported and reinforced by reading of the Scripture. Exegesis of Genesis 3 and Eve's first 'sin' served as basis for the notion of female spiritual weakness and malleability and women were subsequently identified with the individual woman Eve. This resulted in an amalgamation and generalisation of spiritual character traits assigned to the female which, in turn, were claimed to be reflected also in the female body. This universalisation was thus subsequently corroborated by a naturalisation of the specific processes of a female body—menstruation, conception, and gestation. All of these processes were understood as divinely inflicted, since, again, Eve had been the first ever woman to experience all of them as a result of divine punishment. 'Natural' and 'God-given' were largely understood as synonyms. Subjection of women to men, therefore, was claimed to be a logical consequence and an equally 'natural' phenomenon.

In the case of the 'men-struating' Jew, notions of both the hermeneutical Jew and the hermeneutical woman align. Themes of alterity and aberration from a male Christian norm reflect in the motif of the bleeding body, be it Jewish or female. In both cases, the bleeding is the result of divine punishment and points to a discursive understanding of both Jews and women as spiritually inferior, hereditarily guilty, and subjected to servitude. Jacques text juxtaposes Jews and women and conflates the regular bleeding in Jewish man with (female) menstruation. Brought together with the stereotypical image of the weak woman, Jacques offers a derogatory description of the Jews that is universally applicable, grounded in authoritative theology, and can thus serve both as proof and reason for manifest legal restrictions against the Jews.<sup>30</sup> This image also stands in a

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. J. L. Bird, "The *Historia Orientalis* of Jacques de Vitry: Visual and Written Commentaries as Evidence of a Text's Audience, Reception, and Utilization," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 20, no. 1 (2003): 58. Thomas, however, had not gone as far as to associate the regular Jewish blood flow with menstruation, as we have seen. His allusion to Matt 27:25 and a sermon by Augustine himself sufficed for Thomas to understand the bleeding ailment as proof for the Jews' hereditary guilt and spiritual inferiority.

<sup>30</sup> Jacques wrote only a few years after the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, which aimed at reforms, curtailing Jews' socio-political advancement and at crusade.

sharp contrast to the normative image of Christian identity—morally and spiritually edified, and, above all, male.

## Naturalisation: Bernard de Gordon's *Lily of Medicine* (1303/5)

The increase in 'scientific' knowledge and medical writing in urban and university contexts during the thirteenth and fourteenth century led to a translation of the 'men-struating' Jew into another theoretical sphere. Contemporary medical writing appealed largely to authoritative writings of the past and thus brought forth a corpus of texts that are also deeply rooted in theologisation. Theological tropes and doctrine powerfully influenced the pre-modern understanding of the human body and of somatic diversity. Most of the medical treatises that mention the 'men-struating' Jew consider his bleeding a natural phenomenon with natural causes. These were based on the theory of the four humours as it was developed by Hippocrates and Galen. Being hot or cold, moist or dry were the essential qualities of every body. Health depended on keeping these four humours in balance. A hot and dry body was the most desirable as it allowed food to be easily turned into bodily fluids. The qualities of heat, cold, moisture, and dryness were connected to the four humours of yellow bile, blood, phlegm, and black bile, which contributed to the formation of fluids like mucus, urine, menstrual blood, or semen. Each of these discharges was also connected to proper digestion, with semen being the most refined of bodily fluids, resulting from men's better concoction of food. Menstrual blood was also processed from food but remained less pure due to women's general cold and moist condition. Its flow out of the body served as means of purging the body of excess cold and moisture. Men who suffered from regular bleeding (usually resulting from haemorrhoids) like women, were believed to be too cold to properly digest foods. As Jews were generally believed to have a more melancholic complexion, resulting from a spicy diet and a more sedentary lifestyle, regular (haemorrhoidal) bleeding was thought to be not only common among them but most natural.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, medical sources hardly ever describe Jewish 'male menstruation' as unclean or shameful leakage as female menstruation was. They also, mostly, do not en-

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31 Cf. P. Biller, "Views of Jews from Paris around 1300: Christian or 'Scientific'?" in *Christianity and Judaism: Papers Read at the 1991 Summer Meeting and the 1992 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. D. Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 197–99; P. Biller, "A 'Scientific' View of Jews from Paris around 1300," *Micrologus* 9 (2001): 137–68.



gage with theological reasoning for Jewish ‘male menstruation’ and are more concerned with explanations grounded in practical medicine. Regardless of its physical location, the bleeding is called “fluxus sanguinis,” or even simply “fluxus,” and was compared to female menses. A poor diet could cause a superfluity of melancholic discharges that the body had to purge. As means of purging, haemorrhoidal and menstrual bleeding were often interchangeable in medical discussions.<sup>32</sup> Yet, some sources paint a more colourful and a more theologically motivated and reinforced picture of Jewish ‘male menstruation.’ Most notably among these is Bernard de Gordon’s *Lily of Medicine* (*Lilium Medicinae*).

Little is known about Bernard de Gordon’s early life and education, but he became an influential teacher of medicine at the University of Montpellier between 1283 and roughly 1308. During that time he compiled the *Lily of Medicine*. Written between 1303 and 1305, the *Lily of Medicine* is a compendium of diseases with their symptoms, causes, and treatments, Bernard deals with illnesses such as scabies, splenic and pestilential fever, and leprosy. Its comprehensiveness and clarity made the *Lily of Medicine* “a prized encyclopedia that was aimed at giving broad access to medicine.”<sup>33</sup> It served as a standard textbook at Montpellier and Vienna universities well into the early modern times.

The compendium’s seven sections follow a clear structure from a definition of the disease to its causes, symptoms, treatment, and, if questions remained, a further clarification. Such clarification appears in Bernard’s discussion of the ‘men-struating’ Jew in his chapter on haemorrhoids and fistulae. According to Bernard, Jews

[...] suffer an immoderate flow of blood from hemorrhoids, for three reasons: generally, because they are in idleness, and for that reason the melancholic superfluities are gathered. Second, they are generally in fear and anxiety, and for this reason melancholic blood is increased, according to this [saying] of Hippocrates: “Fear and timidity, if they have a lot of time [to work], generate the melancholic humor.” Third, this occurs as a divine punishment, according to [the text], “And he struck them in their posteriors and gave them over to perpetual opprobrium.” (*Lily of Medicine*, 5.21)<sup>34</sup>

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32 Cf. e.g. Albertus Magnus, *Sancti doctoris ecclesiae Alberti Magni Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum episcopi opera omnia*, vol. 12, ed. B. Geyer (Münster: Aschendorff, 1955); or Theodoricus de Cervia, *The Surgery of Theodoric: Ca A.D. 1267*, ed. E. Campbell and J. Colton, 2 vols. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1955–1960).

33 L. Demaitre, “Bernard de Gordon,” in *Medieval Science, Technology, and Medicine: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 85.

34 “Iudei ut plurimum patiuntur fluxum haemorrhoid. propter tria, et quia communiter sunt in ocio, et ideo congregantur superfluitates melancholicae. Secundo, quod communiter sunt in

Bernard follows the classical Hippocratic teaching about the four humours here according to which a superfluity of the melancholic humour needs to be purged from the body by means of bleeding. Containment of these superfluous melancholic humours would result in a variety of ailments, from skin diseases to leprosy, and from dropsy to consumption. Many of these diseases were associated with the Jews, which Bernard understands as proof for his claim about the superfluity of melancholic blood in Jews. He draws on two strands of earlier scientific traditions regarding haemorrhoids and the regular bleeding resulting from them. Like many of his predecessors, Bernard traces the bleeding haemorrhoids to an accumulation of melancholic blood resulting from lack of motion and bad digestion. However, he describes the Jews' melancholic condition as arising from immobility, timidity, and a constant state of apprehension. This lifestyle, according to Bernard but following Hippocrates, resulted in an imbalance of the bodily fluids. While other medical treatises saw bleeding haemorrhoids in all men as natural, Bernard argues that the condition is natural, yet found *especially* in Jews as a result of divine punishment. He alludes to Ps 78:66 and references God's punishment of the Philistines with an anal disease, commonly interpreted as haemorrhoids. While Bernard omits Matt 27:25 as the standard exegetical proof-text for the so-called "Jewish flux," the textual tradition, which we have already encountered in Jacques de Vitry's report, suggests a clear allusion here to the motif of Jewish 'male menstruation.' Thus, for Bernard, and for his readers, the Jews' haemorrhoidal bleeding was no longer a result of humoral composition *alone*; it was a punishment for their religious failings that had culminated in the crucifixion of Christ. We see here how theories of 'nature' intersect with theological notions. Again, as in the example of physiological processes of the female body such as menstruation, 'nature' is understood and works as a synonym for 'God-giveness.' Medical and 'scientific' underpinning however, aimed at the mechanism of naturalisation in terms of 'biologisation,' that is, connected to the human body and its functions.

Bernard de Gordon was a physician and teacher of medicine not an exegete. His text shows that a motif like Jewish 'male menstruation' reached beyond theological debate alone. Theological understandings of physiological processes were inextricably linked with medical knowledge and natural philosophical ideas of the human body and its functions. Pre-modern concepts of digestion, excretion, and reproduction had theological and physiological dimensions.

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timore et anxietate, ideo multiplicatur sang. melancholicus, iuxta illud Hipp. Timor et pusillanimitas si multum tempus habuerint, melancholicum faciunt hum. Tertio quia hoc ex ultione divina, iuxta illud. Et percussit eos in posteriori dorsi, opprobrium sempiternum dedit illis." Demaitre, *Doctor Bernard de Gordon*, 9.

The *Lily of Medicine* was widely used by medical practitioners and notions like Jewish ‘male menstruation’ thus moved into a medical domain. The ‘menstruating’ Jew gained in currency and became naturalised as a consequence.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, Bernard’s example also demonstrates how Christianity pervaded every aspect of culture and knowledge of the period. Physicians and natural philosophers wrote on the basis of their predecessors and reiterated their theological preconceptions, stereotypes, and universalisations. Bernard’s explanation for Jewish ‘male menstruation’ reads much like a “suppressed tautology”: theological notions about Jewish somatic alterity are understood as a ‘natural’ phenomenon, that is both a biological *and* a divinely inflicted condition. This condition, in turn, is explained within a exegetical framework to support themes of Jewish hereditary guilt and inferiority. It thus “functions both as a projection onto and a lens for reading Jewish bodies as rendered inferior through the punishment and its attendant shame.”<sup>36</sup> Again, we see a parallel with female bodies punished with distinct somatic processes, like menstruation, to shame them for the ‘sin’ of the first woman Eve. In both examples we can also see how the mechanisms of universalisation and naturalisation intersect to support this discourse of hereditary guilt, shame, and inferiority.

## Normalisation: The ‘Men-struating’ Jew on the Iberian Peninsula

By the end of the fifteenth century, the motif of Jewish ‘male menstruation’ had gained momentum in various literary contexts. The figure of the ‘menstruating’ Jew had entered a canon of motifs supporting the theme of Jewish ‘Otherness.’ The correspondence of spiritual and somatic inferiority could now be deployed also on a real and material level. Reconquista Spain serves as an example of how the motif of Jewish ‘male menstruation’ was employed within the discourse of blood purity, genealogical lines, and ultimately, a new understanding of race, which contributed to the normalisation of discrimination against Jews on a social, political, and legal level.

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35 Cf. G. Pomata, “Menstruating Men: Similarity and Difference of the Sexes in Early Modern Medicine,” in *Generation and Degeneration: Tropes of Reproduction in Literature and History from Antiquity through Early Modern Europe*, ed. V. Finucci and K. Brownlee (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 109–52.

36 Kaplan, “‘His Blood Be on Us and on Our Children,’” 113.

In the course of the fifteenth century, belief in conversion and baptism declined as more Iberian Jews (and Muslims) converted to Christianity. Now that it was no longer possible to draw clear lines between community borders, means of distinguishing one from the other in terms of somatic aspects and 'biological' facts became a necessity. The doctrine of "purity of blood," formalised by the Inquisition in the *limpieza de sangre* decrees by the end of the fifteenth century, proclaimed that "purity of faith" was manifested in the "purity of blood" and hence tried to trace back "Jewish blood" in New Christians. Following these decrees, only people with a purely "Old Christian" lineage could hold civic offices. *Conversos* were considered to be culturally and socially inferior and, subsequently, unclean on a 'biological' level. Their uncleanliness and inferiority was considered inherited in connection with their religious descent. 'Biological' notions and a proto-racial understanding of difference were the result of mass conversions, which "heightened anxieties of Christian identity."<sup>37</sup> *Conversos* were increasingly considered an "ever-present danger to the faith, [...] which all but excluded the chance of conversion and incorporation."<sup>38</sup> The notion of "purity of blood" served a proto-racist construction of social identity in which the "New Christians," *conversos* and "Judaisers," that is, *conversos* who were claimed to secretly adhere to their old Jewish faith, were painted as initiators of political and social anarchy. The *limpieza de sangre* decrees following this ideological discourse were designed to systematically curtail the Jews' (and Muslims') social advancement and prevent the Christian majority society from purported socio-political danger. The 'men-struating' Jew figures in a number of texts from the Iberian Peninsula from the fifteenth until the seventeenth centuries with his bleeding as a sin of somatic difference and general sinfulness.

Among the first to mention the 'men-struating' Jew is Alonso de Espina in his  *Fortalitium Fidei*  of 1460. The Franciscan Catholic Bishop, preacher, and writer de Espina reflects on the reasons for ritual murder and draws back to Thomas de Cantimpré's report of 1267. He cites Thomas almost verbatim, mentioning the "stain of blood" with which Jews would be marked through all generation.<sup>39</sup> *Conversos*, who clung to their old faith, bore this sign. The  *Fortalitium*  was highly influential in discussions of *conversos* for centuries. In the seventeenth century, the motif was increasingly combined with legal language, seeking to create "a no-

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<sup>37</sup> Loomba, "Race and the Possibilities of Comparative Critique," 506.

<sup>38</sup> M. Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 28.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. de Espina,  *Fortalitium Fidei* , III, cons. VII, 3:5.

tion of ‘impure blood’ as referring to one’s family or caste.”<sup>40</sup> Medical treatises, like in the fourteenth century, tried to bring together theological reasons and physiological explanations for Jewish ‘male menstruation.’ The bleeding, especially in Judaisers, would serve as a sign and revelation of their “hidden, rejected religion.”<sup>41</sup> While in Central Europe, during the sixteenth century, medical writing had already very much distanced itself from religion, this was not the case in Iberia. In 1495, Bernard de Gordon’s *Lily of Medicine* was translated into Castilian and provided the basis of many following claims about Jewish ‘male menstruation’ in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, again linking theological and ‘scientific’ theories of identity.

The ‘men-struating’ Jew figures most prominently in the work of Spanish court physician and jurisconsult Juan de Quiñones de Benavente (d. 1646). Following the *auto-da-fé* in Madrid in 1632, Quiñones issued a treatise on Jewish ‘male menstruation.’ Francisco de Andrada, a twenty-eight year old *converso* from Portugal who was convicted of Judaising, was said to suffer from a “flow of blood which nature had given to the women and which is called menstruation.”<sup>42</sup> Quiñones draws on his predecessors to provide both theological and medical reasons for Jewish bleeding.<sup>43</sup> Jewish ‘male menstruation’ supported the concept of Jewish impurity and inferiority, which could not be eradicated by baptism. Quiñones concludes accordingly that “when they [sc. the Jews] are baptised, the [stain of] blood is removed and when they fall back to their errors [sc. erroneous beliefs], the ignominious stain, which they bear will return.”<sup>44</sup>

Quiñones was the first to also combine the motif’s theological reasoning with legal language. He lobbied for freeing the medical profession—his own—

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<sup>40</sup> J. L. Beusterien, “Jewish Male Menstruation in Seventeenth-Century Spain,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 73, no. 3 (1999): 447.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 449.

<sup>42</sup> J. Quiñones de Benavente, *Relación del auto de la fee que se celebrou en la villa de Madrid Corte de su Magestad domingo quarto de Jullio de mill y seiscientos y treinta y dos años*, s.a. [1632?], 1r–1v. The original Spanish reads: “[...] fue Francisco de Andrada, de quien se dixo, que padecia todos los meses el fluxu de sangre, que naturaleza dio a las mugeres, que llaman, Menstruo.”

<sup>43</sup> Julia Gebke offers a thoroughly executed close reading of Quiñones’ *Memorial*, identifying his sources and placing it into the context of the biologisation of Christian anti-Jewish and, increasingly, proto-racist antisemitic polemic. Cf. J. Gebke, (*Fremd*)*Körper Die Stigmatisierung der Neuchristen im Spanien der Frühen Neuzeit* (Wien: Böhlau, 2019), 198–219.

<sup>44</sup> J. de Quiñones, *Memorial de Juan de Quiñones dirigido a F. Antonio de Sotomayor, Inquisidor General. Sobre el caso de Francisco de Andrada, sospechoso de pertenecer a la raza judía, discutiendo sobre los medios de conocer y perseguir a ella*, s.l. s.a. [1632], 21r–21v. The original Spanish reads: “que baptizandose se les quita la sangre: y si bueluen a reincidir en sus errores, les buelue de nuevo esta infame macula que padecen.”

from *conversos* by accusing them of impurity of blood. Motifs like Jewish 'male menstruation' were useful in this context and were applied in inquisitorial cases.<sup>45</sup> This general assumption of a genealogical impurity of Jewish blood was thus subsequently transferred to the social sphere of kinship and class status. This development of a cultural and 'biological' understanding of identity on the Iberian Peninsula is rooted in socio-political anxiety. Christians, Jews, and Muslims had lived next to each other in Reconquista Spain, and it was largely impossible to distinguish between members of the communities on physical terms. Visible markers of faith, such as a distorted body image, were no longer sufficient. Especially following the possibility and reality of conversion, it was necessary to find a means of distinction "that lay deeper inside."<sup>46</sup> Religion as a cultural category of identity was now not only connected to physical appearance but came to reside *within* the body. As such, it could no longer be separated from it and resulted in the classification of communities, families, and individuals on an increasingly 'racial' level. Inheritance was equated with 'biology' and the processes of universalisation and naturalisation intersected to normalise and institutionalise the socio-political and socio-economic marginalisation and discrimination of these groups of people.

## Conclusion

The 'men-struating' Jew serves as one example of how the ancient Christian claim of Jewish spiritual inferiority, of their hereditary guilt, and perpetual servitude were associated with a distinct somatic image beginning in the twelfth century. Theological differences were mapped onto the body to gain outward appearance and visibility. An image of 'the Jew' was created that is inherently different from the image of 'the Christian,' translating both spiritual and physiological aberrations. Somatic differences and anomalies were used as motifs to transmit the theme of Jewish 'Otherness' and serve a discourse of their overall inferiority vis-à-vis Christian superiority. This doctrine was subsequently translated into both social and legal spheres throughout pre-modern Europe. The motif of Jewish 'male menstruation' was applied in sources of various genres to support and reinforce the legal and socio-economic subjection of Jews. While images surrounding the motif of Jewish 'male menstruation' may vary according to the sources' generic intention and their authors' motivation, as we

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Beusterien, "Jewish Male Menstruation," 456.

<sup>46</sup> Loomba, "Race and the Possibilities of Comparative Critique," 506.

have seen, the motif's underlying discourse was firmly established and transported self-evidently through the ages.

An important aspect of the motif of Jewish 'male menstruation' is the cultural importance of blood. It had been promoted by theology across a range of cultural and theological narratives, from Christ's bleeding at the cross to Mary's immaculate conception, from blood lineage denoting kinship to martyrdom in battle. With regards to the 'men-struating' Jew, blood serves both as marker and binding element to reflect the Jews' heredity guilt: as they took the liability for the spilling of Christ's blood at the crucifixion, they are condemned to suffer from a similar blood loss. Evoking scriptural personae like Cain, who is marked by blood as a result of his shedding of blood, serves to corroborate the notion of the hereditary nature of Jewish servitude grounded in their spiritual inferiority.

It does not come as a surprise that the Jewish "fluxus sanguinis" was associated with menstruation. The images surrounding the motif of Jewish 'male menstruation' vary from haemorrhoidal bleeding to an uncontrollable regular purging of the body. All of these images are associated with embarrassment and shame—stereotypes that draw back to ancient Christian exegesis concerned with the female and creating a distinct image of 'women.' Its construction followed specific ideological mechanisms—stereotyping, universalising, and naturalising. The church fathers discuss women's inferior status based on their stereotypic traits such as weakness and fickleness. These *topoi* could easily be used as a "shaming device"<sup>47</sup> also for men who would not fit into the normative frame of the Christian male. We encountered this practice in Jacques de Vitry's *Historia Orientalis*, which explicitly associates the Jews with female weakness. The theme of women's spiritual inferiority manifested itself in the church fathers' call for the subjection of women to men, a claim which is corroborated also by their exegesis of Genesis 3. Eve's 'sin' was understood as proof for women's spiritual and mental weakness and resulted in a "limitation of women's activities and sphere of authority."<sup>48</sup> Here, the process of universalisation becomes apparent as all women are identified with the first woman Eve and her 'weakness' and 'sinfulness'—a process very similar to the identification of the Jews present at Christ's crucifixion with all following generations who inherit their ancestors' guilt. Lastly, Christian exegesis claimed that the subjection of women to men, based on their stereotypic weakness and corroborated by the amalgamation of all women to one 'woman' identified with Eve, was thus a 'natural' phenomenon.

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47 E. A. Clark, "Ideology, History, and the Construction of 'Woman' in Late Ancient Christianity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, no. 2 (1994): 169.

48 *Ibid.*, 168.

It set by the side of many other categories designating bodily necessities, such as food, sexual relations, reproduction and bodily emissions. 'Nature' often reflected back to God as the reason for and initiator of all of these matters concerning the body, sex, and gender. Menstruation as one of these processes too is God-given and thus 'natural,' but since it is also the result of the first 'sin' it is something shameful and impure. Jewish 'male menstruation' too is divinely inflicted and undisputable in the same way. As we have seen in Bernard de Gordon's *Lily of Medicine*, a 'scientific' understanding of a regular blood flow as means of purging shifted from a natural to a supernatural and, ultimately, aberrant phenomenon when linked to the idea of divine punishment. Both Jewish and female bodies are characterised subsequently by this abjection, their bleeding is now considered humiliating and shameful. It serves as an image for the transmission of the theme of alterity grounded in their spiritual inferiority.

The somatic marking of the Jews could and came to serve increasingly as a means of reinforcing theological doctrine and supporting legal and social restrictions. The example from the Iberian Peninsula showed that when the church failed to exert power over the Jews, 'scientific' narratives were developed to map the Jews' discursive inferiority onto their bodies. The *limpieza de sangre* decrees sought to ensure "purity of blood" in terms of blood lineage, however, the notion of kinship is clearly conflated with age-old themes of alterity and motifs of a distinct and diseased body. Rendering the Jews' inferiority visible helped to fix the ideological discourse, especially when Jews posed a threat to the Christian majority community in their social and political advancement.<sup>49</sup> The construction of a visible identity with certain somatic features inextricably linked to it also shows, however, how alterity and diversity were understood in proto-racial terms already in pre-modern times. Based on a figural interpretation of scriptural personae such as Cain or later appearances such as the 'menstruating' Jew, a proto-racial idea was established that linked everyone non-Christian, non-white, and predominantly, non-male to notions of 'Otherness,' shamefulness, and wholesale inferiority. The discourses that had developed in theology already in late ancient times in scholastic and patristic literature

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<sup>49</sup> Kaplan has shown that as a counter-example, the 'men-struating' Jew figures less prominently in early modern English sources and links this observation to the absence of "threatening Jewish presence." Jewish communities in early modern England were hardly existent, and where Jews did dwell their communities were small in number and mostly illegal. This already subordinate position in England did not call for the need of a more distinct delineation of Jews and Christians to ensure the latter's social and legal superiority. Motifs of somatic inferiority visualising a general discourse of Jewish wholesale inferiority had thus become obsolete. Cf. Kaplan, "His Blood Be on Us and on Our Children," 119–22.



were easily attached to the body and linked to further pre-modern perceptions of physiology, biological processes, and notions of sex and gender. Subsequently, they materialised in concrete images of faint women and bleeding Jewish men both of which were too weak to fulfil a proper societal role. Figural understanding as well as cultural narratives had and have multivalent possibilities. As such, they “enable the translation of hereditary inferiority from one group to another,”<sup>50</sup> as is apparent in the case of the ‘men-struating’ Jew where religion, race, sex and gender intersect in a polyvalent form of discrimination based on the theologically established notion of ontological inferiority.

Jewish ‘male menstruation’ is part of a catalogue of somatic markers of the ‘Jewish’ body and can be understood as one of the characteristics of the hermeneutical Jew. Authors who apply the figure of the ‘men-struating’ Jew do so in different variations of the motif mostly connected to their text’s generic intention. Their motivation, however, is to shape, round out, and reinforce Christian identity as an identity inherently distinct from both Jews and women. While religious identity has traditionally been understood as constructed culturally, the motif of Jewish ‘male menstruation’ suggests that corporeal aspects served the construction as categories deeply connected with faith. It demonstrates how culture and nature are fluctuant categories and can link to shape “the (il)logic of both religious and pseudo-biological racism.”<sup>51</sup> Theological notions of perpetual inferiority, based on hereditary guilt, work as their underpinning.

The ‘men-struating’ Jew can be used as an attempt to challenge ideas of purely religiously motivated Jew-hatred in pre-modern times and can help to identify proto-racial and, thus, proto-racist constructions of religious and cultural identity. Studying pre-modern sources and motifs like Jewish ‘male menstruation’ from this point of view can support our understanding of how racism has functioned and continues to function and how to successfully challenge, dismantle, and reject its underlying discourses.

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<sup>50</sup> Kaplan, *Figuring Racism*, 168.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

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Sara Offenberg

## “All the World’s a Stage”: Imagined Jewish Rituals in Medieval Christian Art and Drama

In many written and artistic Christian sources, we find an anti-Jewish portrayal of an alleged Jewish costume of desecrating the Host or blood libels. The stories and images are so common that we find, for example, the story of Simon of Trent being used as a joke in a Facebook post from April 3, 2015, wishing a “Happy Passover.”

Following Miri Rubin’s methodology,<sup>1</sup> where she ties together blood libels and accusations of host desecration in texts, images, and drama, in this paper I wish to further discuss the issue of “staging” or the public sphere of the accusations, with a focus on images and texts written in the vernacular language.



Fig. 1: A Facebook post using the image of Simon of Trent, April 3, 2015. Screenshot by the author of this article.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/TheoriesOf/>, accessed October 7, 2020. [No longer accessible.]

<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), and idem, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

First, I will address the Castilian thirteenth-century *Cántigas de Santa María* and the Jewish response to it. In a second step, I will confront the English fifteenth-century *Play of the Sacrament* from Croxton and briefly analyze a contemporary demonstration of the play.

## The *Cántigas de Santa María*

The reign of Alfonso X was characterized by cultural and political developments.<sup>2</sup> He was renowned as a learned king and thus received the title: “El Sabio,” the wise.<sup>3</sup> Hundreds of poems are ascribed to him, mainly those dedicated to the Virgin Mary entitled the *Cántigas de Santa María*; Alfonso X compiled this book of stories and songs, accompanied by illuminations, over a period of three decades, completing it in the year 1284,<sup>4</sup> and we shall refer mainly to the performance aspect of the *Cántigas*.<sup>5</sup> Two history books bear his name as the author: *Estoria de Espanna*, on the history of Spain,<sup>6</sup> and *General Estoria*, a world history intended to reach his own era but actually ending at the period of Jesus.<sup>7</sup>

The non-Christian residents of Castile, that is, the Muslims and the Jews, enjoyed religious freedom but were also legally discriminated against; the ban on Muslims and Jews ruling over Christians prohibited them from serving in govern-

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2 Cf. R. I. Burns, ed., *The World of Alfonso the Learned and James the Conqueror: Intellect and Force in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), and J. F. O’Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 538–81.

3 R. I. Burns, “*Stupor Mundi*: Alfonso X of Castile, the Learned,” in *Emperor of Culture: Alfonso X the Learned of Castile and his Thirteenth-Century Renaissance*, ed. R. I. Burns (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 1–13. According to Burns, it is doubtful that Alfonso X actually wrote the entire corpus ascribed to him.

4 Cf. Alfonso X, *Cántigas de Santa María*, ed. W. Mettmann, 3 vols. (Coimbra: Por ordem da Universidade, 1959–1964), and the translation by K. Kulp-Hill, *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, The Wise: A Translation of the Cantigas de Santa Maria* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000). Cf. also P. A. Patton, “The Cantigas de Santa Maria and the Jews of Castile,” in *Art of Estrangement: Redefining Jews in Reconquest Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 135–69.

5 Cf. J. E. Keller, “Drama, Ritual, and Incipient Opera in Alfonso’s *Cantigas*,” in *Emperor of Culture: Alfonso X the Learned of Castile and His Thirteenth-Century Renaissance*, ed. R. I. Burns (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 72–89.

6 Cf. D. Catalán, *La Estoria de España de Alfonso X: Creación y evolución*, 5 vols. (Madrid: Ed. Gredos, 1992).

7 Cf. P. Sánchez-Prieto Borja, ed., *Alfonso X el Sabio: General Estoria*, 10 vols. (Madrid: Fundación José Antonio de Castro, 2009).

mental institutions. According to Yitzhak Baer, some Jews ranked as high, key officers in the kingdom but not in the army or in the high courts.<sup>8</sup> In keeping with the decision of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, although Jews were not obligated to wear an identifying badge,<sup>9</sup> they were made to wear special clothes separating them from the Christians. In Alfonso X’s extensive seven-part book of law entitled *Las Siete Partidas*, it states that the Jews had to wear special headgear in order to be distinguished from the Christians.<sup>10</sup>

The *Cántigas de Santa María* appeared in some illuminated manuscripts in the last quarter of the thirteenth century (around 1283), and some of the manuscripts that were written and illuminated under the supervision of Alfonso X still remain. We have four original manuscripts, two of them illustrated with over two thousand miniatures: *Códice Rico*, El Escorial, Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, Ms. T.I.1,<sup>11</sup> made in 1283 and entirely decorated and Biblioteca Nazionale at Florence, Banco Rari 20, which was also decorated, but whose illuminations were not all completed; *Códice de Toledo*, Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid 10069, which contains one hundred poems; and the fourth manuscript, J.B.2 (Escorial E), which contains over four hundred poems, including all of those that appear in the other three manuscripts as well as unique poems that appear only here. It was made in the years 1281–1282, with decorated initials, and on every tenth poem an illustration of a musician appears.<sup>12</sup> The *Cántigas de Santa María* is written

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8 Cf. Y. Baer, *From the Age of Reconquest to the Fourteenth Century*, vol. 1 of *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961), 111–30; T. F. Glick, “Introduction,” in *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain*, ed. V. B. Mann, T. F. Glick, and J. D. Dodds (New York: Braziller, 1992), 1–9; D. E. Carpenter, *Alfonso X and the Jews: An Edition of and Commentary on Siete Partidas 724 “De los Judíos,”* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 30, 36, 67–69, 99–101; J. F. O’Callaghan, *The Learned King: The Reign of Alfonso X of Castile* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 102, 108–13.

9 Cf. S. Grayzel, *A Study of their Relations during the Years 1198–1254, Based on the Papal Letters and the Conciliar Decrees of the Period*, vol. 1 of *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966), 61, 307–11; G. Kisch, “The Yellow Badge in History,” *Historia Judaica* 19 (1957): 89–146; R. Straus, “The ‘Jewish Hat’ as an Aspect of Social History,” *Jewish Social Studies* 4 (1942): 59–72.

10 Cf. Carpenter, *Alfonso X and the Jews*, 99–101.

11 See the facsimile edition: Alfonso X El Sabio, *Las Cantigas de Santa María: Códice Rico, Ms. T-I-1 Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial*, ed. L. Fernández Fernández and E. Fidalgo Francisco, 2 vols. (Madrid: Patrimonio Nacional, 2011).

12 W. Mettmann discusses the differences between the manuscripts: *Cantigas de Santa María*, 1:25–40; cf. also J. E. Keller and A. G. Cash, *Daily Life Depicted in the Cantigas de Santa María* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 1–2; C. L. Scarborough, “Introduction,” in *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, The Wise: A Translation of the Cantigas de Santa María*, trans. K. Kulp-Hill (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000), xix–xxxvi.



in the vernacular Galician-Portuguese common in Castile,<sup>13</sup> and some of the poems in it were designed to be read and sung aloud, as they are accompanied by musical notes, thus the performative aspect is clear.

The book's anti-Jewish illustrations and stories have been discussed in previous research. Louise Mirrer addressed the portrayal of the bodies of Jews in the book's text and illuminations.<sup>14</sup> Albert Bagby characterized five main subjects regarding the Jews in this text: the Jew as the enemy of Christianity; the Jew as the Devil's disciple; the Jew as a symbol of avarice; the traitorous Jew; and the converted Jew.<sup>15</sup> Bagby studied Alfonso X's attitude toward the Jews by comparing the songs that refer to Jews in the *Cântigas de Santa Maria* with other contemporary popular songs that also referred to the Jews that were circulating in Europe. According to Bagby, of thirty songs in Alfonso X's book, only eight are familiar in other collections of stories. Thus, according to him, the rest of the songs must have been composed by Alfonso X. Bagby claims that even in the only three songs in which the Jew does not receive malicious characteristics, the only positive aspect of the Jew's behavior consists of his pleas for Mary's help. Vikki Hatton and Angus MacKay suggest that the attitude toward the Jews in the *Cântigas de Santa Maria* was ambivalent, as the anti-Jewish phrases balance the more neutral phrases regarding the Jews, especially in comparison to other anti-Jewish stories of the time.<sup>16</sup>

Dwayne E. Carpenter offered five categories different from those proposed by Bagby regarding the Jews in the *Cântigas de Santa Maria*: Jewish culpability for the death of Jesus; Jewish disparagement of the Virgin, Jesus, and Christianity; Jews as allies of the Devil; Jews as avaricious; and the rescue and salvation of Jews. Carpenter studied the amount of hostility against the Jews in the *Cântigas de Santa Maria* by researching the poems that mention the Jews. He relates not only to stories where the Jews are mentioned as main characters but also to in-

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13 Cf. A. Doron, "On the Affinity between the Hebrew Creation in Toledo and its Literature Environment: The Prolog of Alfonso el Sabio's *Cântigas de Santa Maria* and the Personal Poems of Todros Ha-Levi Abulafia," [in Hebrew] *Biqoret U-parshanut* 32 (1998): 82–83.

14 Cf. L. Mirrer, "The Jew's Body in Medieval Iberian Literary Portraits and Miniatures: Examples from the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and the *Cantar de mio Cid*," *Shofar* 12, no. 3 (1994): 17–30.

15 Cf. A. I. Bagby, "The Jew in the *Cântigas* of Alfonso X, El Sabio," *Speculum* 46, no. 4 (1971): 670–88.

16 Cf. V. Hatton and A. MacKay, "Anti-Semitism in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 60, no. 3 (1986): 189–92.

cidental references where, he claims, the true nature of the attitude toward the Jews is more clearly revealed.<sup>17</sup>

Pamela Patton suggests studying the image of the Jew in Alfonso X’s book not as a measure of the king’s hostility toward the Jews but rather in order to learn about the anti-Jewish attitude of Christian Castilian society.<sup>18</sup> This notion is apparent in the poems, whether it is the king’s position or not. Therefore, the illustrations are less representative of Alfonso X’s attitude toward the Jews and more reflective of the social atmosphere around him, so although the manuscripts were produced in his court, they represent ideas prevalent in society at the time. The illuminations in Alfonso’s book not only illustrate the text but also interpret it; in some instances, the artists added information to the poem, so even if the Jew did not participate as a main character in a story, the artist portrayed him in most scenes and emphasized his grotesque nature.

Patton points to an example of this phenomenon in the illuminations of *Cántiga* 3, which tell the story of Theophilus. Although the Jew in the song is mentioned in only a single verse, the illustrations nonetheless portray the Jew in two scenes out of six. The text states that Theophilus acted on the advice of a Jew: “per consello dun judeu,”<sup>19</sup> and the scenes portray the Jew as associated with and resembling the Devil in his grotesque appearance.<sup>20</sup> Hatton and MacKay, on the other hand, claim that in comparison to the story *Milagros de Nustra Señora*, written by Gonzalo de Berceo (c. 1198–after 1252), the Jew’s presence is minor, and he is mentioned as merely a consultant.<sup>21</sup> However, the negligible mention of the Jew implies the anti-Jewish nature of the text in the *Cántigas de Santa Maria*, for the audience needed no further information to understand the close relationship and supposed alliance between the Jew and the Devil. It seems that there was a public demand for such depictions, since most of the sto-

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17 Cf. D. E. Carpenter, “The Portrayal of the Jew in Alfonso the Learned’s *Cantigas de Santa Maria*,” in *Iberia and Beyond: Hispanic Jews between Cultures*, ed. B. D. Cooperman (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), 16–18, 31–34.

18 Cf. P. A. Patton, *Art of Estrangement*, and idem, “Constructing the Inimical Jew in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*: Theophilus’s Magician in Text and Image,” in *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture*, ed. M. B. Merback (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 234–35.

19 *Cántiga* 3, l.19, Mettmann, *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, 1:62.

20 Cf. Patton, “Constructing the Inimical Jew,” 241–52. Cf. also D. Jackson, “The Influence of the Theophilus Legend: An Overlooked Miniature in Alfonso X’s *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and its Wider Context,” in *Under the Influence: The Concept of Influence and the Study of Illuminated Manuscripts*, ed. J. Lowden and A. Bovey (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 75–87.

21 Cf. Hatton and MacKay, “Anti-Semitism in the *Cantigas*,” 189–92.

ries in the book were already familiar in western Europe, and only a few of them were original.

I would like to focus on *Cántiga* 34 of the *Cántigas de Santa Maria* where we read the story of a Jew desecrating an icon of the Virgin Mary.

The story takes place on the streets of Constantinople, the location of an unusual, beautiful wooden panel painting of Mary and Child. One night a Jew steals the icon and hides it under his mantle. He brings the icon to his house, throws it into the lavatory, and contaminates it. Mary allows the Devil to kill the Jew as punishment for his crime, and nothing remains of the Jew. Meanwhile, a good Christian finds and rescues the icon from the impure place and carefully cleans it. Afterwards, he places the icon in a worthy location in his home, offering it a tribute as a means of securing his salvation, and the icon emits a pleasant scent.<sup>22</sup>

Like most of the illustrated poems in the *Cántigas de Santa Maria*, the story is portrayed in six scenes, and the Jew occupies three of them. In the first scene on the left, the Jew appears in grotesque profile,<sup>23</sup> walking by the city's buildings, dressed in a red garment and a pointed hat as he raises the icon in his right hand. In the next scene, we notice that the garment reaches his knees and thus shows his pointed red shoes, part of the distinguishing mark required in the *Siete Partidas* 7.24.11.<sup>24</sup> In this scene, we notice the Jew throwing the icon into the lavatory, while a devil stands next to the door behind him. In the third scene, we observe two demons carrying the Jew's body. All three characters are portrayed in profile, showing their grotesque noses and pointed chins. The next three scenes portray the good Christian's acts. In all but one of the scenes, the viewer can clearly see the icon of the Virgin and Child, so viewing the Jew's theft and contamination of the icon must have had a shocking impact on Christian audiences.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Bagby, "The Jews in the *Cántigas*," 676; Keller and Cash, *Daily Life Depicted*, 15; Kulp-Hill, *Songs of Holy Mary*, 45; Mettmann, *Cántigas de Santa Maria*, 1:143–44; Patton, *Art of Estrangement*, 88–89, 160. We find a similar story in the book *De Locis Sanctis*, written around 683–686 by Adamnan (ca. 625–704) the abbot of Iona. Cf. P. Schäfer, *Mirror of His Beauty: Feminine Images of God from the Bible to the Early Kabbalah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 191–95. Similar stories are found also in twelfth- and thirteenth-century France and Germany, see: I. G. Marcus, "A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis: The Culture of Early Ashkenaz," in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed. D. Biale (New York: Schocken, 2002), 2:176–82; M. Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 186.

<sup>23</sup> On the Jewish nose and appearance in Christian art, see S. Lipton, *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> On the distinguishing mark, see Carpenter, *Alfonso X and the Jews*, 99–101.



Fig. 2: *Códice Rico*, El Escorial, Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, Ms. T.1.1, fol. 50r.  
Source: Alfonso X El Sabio, *Cantigas de Santa María*, vol. 2: *Códice Rico*, Ms. T.1-1, ed. L. Fernández Fernández and J. C. Ruiz Souza (Madrid: Patrimonio Nacional, 2011).

The similarities between Alfonso X and some of the characters in Rabbi Isaac Ibn Sahula's *Meshal Haqadmoni* written in 1281 Castile,<sup>25</sup> have already been pointed out by Yitzhak Baer and Raphael Loewe.<sup>26</sup> Thus, let us now turn to a discussion of *Meshal Haqadmoni* and connect it to the *Cántigas*. The book is divided into five main chapters (On Wisdom, On Penitence, On Sound Counsel, On Humility, On Reverence), each opening with the vices of a given character and ending with the author's praise of the virtues of the respective trait. Every chapter opens with a polemic dialog between the cynic and the author, with both of them referring to scientific knowledge of nature, medicine, and philosophy, all disguised in fables.<sup>27</sup> The stories all begin with the perspective of the

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**25** On the text and images of *Meshal Haqadmoni*, see Y. Ayalon, "The Illustrations to Meshal ha-Qadmoni of Ishaq ibn Sholomo ibn Sahulah" [in Hebrew] (MA thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2002); S. Gronemann, "Extant 15th Century Ashkenazi Illuminated Manuscripts of Meshal hakadmoni by Isaac ibn Sahula" [in Hebrew] (PhD diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2006). Gronemann's research offers an in depth comparison between the illuminations in all five manuscripts and the earliest printed copy of *Meshal Haqadmoni*, and all the illustrations are reproduced in the dissertation's second volume. Cf. also U. Schubert and K. Schubert, *Jüdische Buchkunst*, 2 vols. (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1983–1992), 1:108–109; A. Oettinger-Salama, "I Place with Texts the Illustrate, Should Point/ The Moral': Exploring the Connection Between the Verbal art and the Visual Art in the Book *Meshal Haqadmoni* by Isaac ibn Sahula," [in Hebrew] *Dapim le-Mehkar be-Sifrut* 13 (2001–2002): 229–56; S. Offenberg, "Expressions of Meeting the Challenges of the Christian Milieu in Medieval Jewish Art and Literature" [in Hebrew] (PhD diss., Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2008); R. Refael-Vivante, *Treasury of Fables: Isaac ibn Sahula's Meshal Haqadmoni (Castile, 1281): Text and Subtext* [in Hebrew] (Ramat Gan: Hebrew University Press, 2017).

**26** Two of the characters in the fables are a lion and an eagle, both rulers of the animal kingdom. Scholars have agreed that the lion and the eagle are allegorical figures of King Alfonso X, therefore we find a direct connection between *Meshal Haqadmoni* and Alfonso's book. Cf. Baer, *A History of the Jews*, 1:199–200; Isaac Ibn Sahula, *Meshal Haqadmoni: Fables from the Distant Past: A Parallel English-Hebrew Text*, ed. R. Loewe, 2 vols. (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), xv–xvii, xci–xcii; R. Loewe, "Who Was the Fox in the Court of Alfonso X?" *Donaire* 6 (April 1996): 50. See also: J. F. O'Callaghan, *Alfonso X and the Cantigas de Santa Maria: A Poetic Biography* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 162–65; O'Callaghan, *The Learned King*, 215–29.

**27** In addition to being a doctor, Ibn Sahula was also a Kabbalist; on possible kabbalistic ideas in *Meshal Haqadmoni*, see: H. Lachter, "Spreading Secrets: Kabbalah and Esotericism in Isaac ibn Sahula's 'Meshal ha-kadmoni,'" *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100, no. 1 (2010): 111–38. For more on Ibn Sahula's kabbalistic writings, see Baer, *A History of the Jews*, 1:422, n. 12a, and see also the bibliography in the Hebrew translation published in Tel Aviv 1986, 508–509, n. 61a; A. Green, "Rabbi Isaac ibn Sahula's Commentary on the *Song of Songs*," [in Hebrew] *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6, nos. 3–4 (1987): 393–491; A. Green, "The Song of Songs in Early Jewish Mysticism," *Orim* 2, no. 2 (1987): 57–59; B. Huss, *Like the Radiance of the Sky: Chapters in the Reception History of the Zohar and the Construction of its Symbolic Value* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2008), 46–47; G. Scholem, "The First Citation from ha-Midrash ha-

cynic, whose goal is to undermine the author’s faith through fables which seem to prove that virtues are not beneficial but rather, harmful. All of the chapters contain fables, mainly about animals. Some of these begin in the middle of a given story, when one of the characters (usually an animal) starts to tell the fable. Only following a long discussion does the plot return to the original tale, which is outside the main frame of the story. This literary motif is characteristic of the structure of the *maqama* and books such as *Kalila wa-Dimna*.<sup>28</sup> Both the humans and the animals in the fables can be characterized as Jewish on account of their words and customs; furthermore, they use biblical verses, the Talmud, and the Midrash to deliver moral messages, even when they are not identified as Jewish but as members of other religions.<sup>29</sup>

None of the original manuscripts of *Meshal Haqadmoni* remain, nor any that were produced during the author’s lifetime or in his homeland; however, we do have five fully illuminated manuscripts from Germany and Italy, all from the fifteenth century: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Opp. 154, produced in 1450, Germany;<sup>30</sup> Munich, Bavarian State Library, MS Heb. 10, produced in 1458, Germany;<sup>31</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Can. 59, produced in 1470 – 1480, Italy;<sup>32</sup> *Rothschild Miscellany*, Jerusalem, Israel Museum, MS 180/51, produced in 1470 – 1480, Italy, fols. 298 v-371 r;<sup>33</sup> Milano, Ambrosian Library, MS X 112 sup, produced in 1483,

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Ne’elam,” [in Hebrew] *Tarbiz* 3 (1932): 181–83; S. M. Stern, “Rationalists and Kabbalists in Medieval Allegory,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 6, no. 2 (1955): 73–86.

**28** On the relations with this genre of literature and its connection to *Meshal ha-Qadmoni*, see Ayalon, “The illustrations to Meshal ha-Qadmoni,” 8–32; D. Pagis, *Change and Tradition in the Secular Poetry: Spain and Italy* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Keter, 1976), 225–30; J. Schirmann, *The History of Hebrew Poetry in Muslim Spain* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1995), 244–50, 347–50.

**29** Cf. Schirmann, *The History of Hebrew Poetry*, 351–58.

**30** See the entire manuscript online on the Oxford, Bodleian Library website: [www2.odl.ox.ac.uk/gsdll/cgi-bin/library?e=d-000-00-0orient02-00-0-0-0-prompt-10-4--dt-0-1-1-1-en-50-20-about-meshal-00001-001-1-lisoZz-8859Zz-1-0&a=d&cl=search&d=orient002-aav.1.1](http://www2.odl.ox.ac.uk/gsdll/cgi-bin/library?e=d-000-00-0orient02-00-0-0-0-prompt-10-4--dt-0-1-1-1-en-50-20-about-meshal-00001-001-1-lisoZz-8859Zz-1-0&a=d&cl=search&d=orient002-aav.1.1).

**31** See the entire manuscript online on the Munich, Bavarian State Library website: [daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0003/bsb00034081/images/](http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0003/bsb00034081/images/).

**32** See the entire manuscript online on the Oxford, Bodleian Library website: [viewer.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/icv/thumbs.php?book=ms.\\_canon.\\_or.\\_59&page=1](http://viewer.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/icv/thumbs.php?book=ms._canon._or._59&page=1).

**33** See the facsimile edition: *The Rothschild Miscellany*, ed. I. Fishof and M. Beit-Arie (London: Facsimile Editions, 1989); I. Ta-Shma, “The Literary Content of the Manuscript,” in *The Rothschild Miscellany*, ed. I. Fishof and M. Beit-Arie (London: Facsimile Editions, 1989), 80–82; cf. also L. Mortara-Ottolenghi, “The Illuminations and the Artists,” in *The Rothschild Miscellany*, ed. I. Fishof and M. Beit-Arie (London: Facsimile Editions, 1989), 220–41.

Italy. The book was first printed in Brescia by Gershom Soncino ca. 1491 and wood cuts replaced the manuscripts' illuminations.<sup>34</sup>

I would like to focus on one of *Meshal Haqadmoni's* fables, from the first chapter: "The Lion upon whom attend Companions."<sup>35</sup> In the story we find a connection to the Jewish-Christian polemic, so we shall examine the fable's text from this perspective. The fable tells the story of a kingdom ruled by a lion, who has two companions and advisors: the hart and the fox, who are facing a serious problem in the kingdom. At the beginning, we learn that the animals are complaining that the lion eats them, so they decide to unite and rebel against the king.<sup>36</sup> The author's approach is to emphasize the notion that there should be no rebellions against the kingdom.<sup>37</sup>

After the animals leave the kingdom, the lion has no more animals to eat, so the fox, in a cunning gesture of flattery, offers him his own flesh but immediately informs him that his flesh is not as tasty as that of the hart (his rival courtier). Thus, the fox ostensibly offers his own flesh to be eaten by the lion, yet at the same time makes it clear that it is not good enough for the king. The scene appears in the same way in all the manuscripts: the fox and hart are standing in front of the lion. Despite the fox's words, the lion refuses to harm the hart, since doing so would be a violation of the alliance between them. The fox speaks badly of the hart and claims that the hart has no noble genealogy, unlike the fox. This claim leads the lion to call upon all his ministers and investigate the hart's pedigree. The fox represents the anti-Jewish stance in King Alfonso X's court, when, according to Loewe, he demands to inspect the hart's *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood), while the hart represents the Jewish courtiers.<sup>38</sup>

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**34** See a scan of the printed book online on the Jerusalem National Library web site [aleph.nli.org.il/nnl/dig/books/bk001021249.html](http://aleph.nli.org.il/nnl/dig/books/bk001021249.html). This is the first printed Hebrew book with a full cycle of illustrations, and it seems that Soncino ordered these illustrations specifically for this book. Cf. E. Beinenfeld, "Meshal Ha-Kadmoni by Isaac b. Solomon ibn Sahula [Brescia: Gershom Soncino, ca. 1491]: The Book and its Illustrations" (MA thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1991), 79.

**35** Ayalon, "The Illustrations to Meshal ha-Kadmoni," 128–42; Loewe, *Meshal Haqadmoni*, 55–114; Offenberg, "Expressions of Meeting the Challenges," 166–74.

**36** Scholars have already pointed that this story reflects the actual historical event in which the nobles in Alfonso X's court rebelled against him in 1271. Loewe, *Meshal Haqadmoni*, lxxviii–lxxx; O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain*, 371–75; O'Callaghan, *The Learned King*, 215–29.

**37** On the notion that it is prohibited to rebel against the kingdom, see S. Albeck, "'Dinno D'malchuso Dinno' in the Jewish Communities of Medieval Spain," [in Hebrew] in *The Abraham Weiss Jubilee Volume: Studies in His Honor Presented by His Colleagues and Disciples on the Occasion of His Completing Four Decades of Pioneering Scholarship*, ed. S. Belkin (New York: Abraham Weiss Jubilee Committee, 1964), 109–25.

**38** Cf. Loewe, *Meshal Haqadmoni*, ci–cvii; Loewe, "Who Was the Fox," 52.

I would like to examine another historical aspect of the story that mainly concerns the Jewish-Christian polemic as it is reflected in the hart’s sermon delivered before the lion. The hart begins to clarify the vices of the wicked soul that speaks against the Talmud and insults it:

On scholarship [Talmud]<sup>39</sup> she loads insults obscene/ Her hart full of contempt; precepts she spurns/ And from their highway into byways turns/ To roam, her outrages past numbering/ All the commandments from her back to fling/ The holy law of God dishonoring.

It seems that here we find criticism against the Jews who have drifted from the Holy Scriptures, prefer foreign literature, and even convert to Christianity. The hart declares that the penalty of the wicked is that they will not have a part in the afterlife and goes on to explain:

I catalogue here those who, by their sin/ Have forfeited all claim to share therein/ Ones who, unorthodox, affirm a lie/ All unbelievers; those who would deny/ The law, the resurrection of the dead/ Or the Messiah’s coming; all these, led/ Into apostasy, with those who lead/ A stray the public; those, too, that secede/ From laws which the community maintain/ Insurgents; those who trespass in disdain/ Defiant: all informers; those whose lies/ Spread slander, or by surgery disguise/ Their covenantal seal.<sup>40</sup>

We hear in these words an echo of the blessing of the apostates (*Birkat Haminim*), part of the *Amidah* prayer.<sup>41</sup>

The hart elaborates on the punishment of the wicked, noting that in addition to being deprived of an afterlife, they are doomed to “excrement that seethes.” This phrase is mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 57a:

He then went and raised Balaam by incantations. He asked him: Who is in repute in the other world? He replied: Israel [...] He said: What is your punishment? They replied: With boiling hot excrement, since a Master has said: Whoever mocks at the words of the Sages is punished with boiling hot excrement.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, in the hart’s words we may find an utterance regarding the public polemics, such as the Paris Talmud Trial in 1240 between Rabbi Yehiel of Paris

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<sup>39</sup> Loewe translated the word *Talmud* as scholarship, however as we shall see later on, it is important to follow the accurate meaning of the word, which here refers to the rabbinic writings.

<sup>40</sup> Loewe, *Meshal Haqadmoni*, 104–6, and see Loewe’s notes there.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 106–7, n. 47. On *Birkat Haminim*, see: R. Langer, *Cursing the Christians?: A History of the Birkat Haminim* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 83–101, 217–20.

<sup>42</sup> Translation taken from I. Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud* (London: Soncino, 1936).



and the converted Nicolas Donin.<sup>43</sup> The Paris Talmud Trial of 1240 was the first of three public disputes initiated by converted Jews, where the Talmud was the main focus of discussion. The aftermath of the 1240 trial was the burning of the Talmud in 1242. In 1263 Barcelona R. Moses ben Nahman (Nahmanides) defended the Talmud against the converted Pablo Christiani, who also disputed with R. Abraham in the second Paris trial in 1271/1273.<sup>44</sup>

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**43** We have Hebrew accounts of the “Talmud Trial” and a Latin text, see: J. D. Galinsky, “The Different Hebrew Versions of the ‘Talmud Trial’ of 1240 in Paris,” in *New Perspectives on Jewish-Christian Relations: In Honor of David Berger*, ed. E. Carlebach and J. J. Schacter (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 132–37. The Latin text was originally published by I. Loeb, “La controverse de 1240 sur le Talmud,” *Revue des études juives* 3 (1881): 39–57. For an English translation of the Latin text, see: H. Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson, 1982), 163–67.

**44** Cf. S. L. Einbinder, *Beautiful Death: Jewish Poetry and Martyrdom in Medieval France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 70–99; S. Grünbaum, *Sefer Vikkuah R. Yehiel* [in Hebrew] (Thorn, 1873); P. L. Rose, “When Was the Talmud Burnt at Paris? A Critical Examination of the Christian and Jewish sources and a new dating: June 1241,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 62 (2011): 324–39; R. Margalio, ed., *R. Yehiel of Paris’ Dispute* [in Hebrew] (Leviv, 1910); G. Dahan and E. Nicolas, eds., *Le brûlement du Talmud à Paris, 1242–1244* (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 1999); R. Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond: The Disputation of 1263 and its Aftermath* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); R. Chazan, “Christian Condemnation, Censorship, and Exploitation of the Talmud,” in *Printing the Talmud: From Bomberg to Schottenstein*, ed. S. Liberman Mintz and G. M. Goldstein (New York: Center for Jewish History, Yeshiva University Museum, 2005), 53–59; R. Chazan, “From Friar Paul to Friar Raymond: The Development of Innovative Missionizing Argumentation,” *Harvard Theological Review* 76 (1983): 289–306; J. Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 319–42; J. Cohen, “The Second Paris Dispute and the Jewish Christian Polemic in the Thirteenth Century,” [in Hebrew] *Tarbiz* 68 (1999): 557–79; S. Eisenberg, “Reading Medieval Religious Disputation: The 1240 ‘Debate’ between Rabbi Yehiel of Paris and Friar Nicholas Donin” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008); H. J. Hames, “Reason and Faith: Inter-Religious Polemic and Christian Identity in the Thirteenth Century,” in *Religious Apologetics—Philosophical Argumentation*, ed. Y. Schwartz and V. Krech (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 267–84; W. C. Jordan, “Marian Devotion and the Talmud Trial of 1240,” in *Ideology and Royal Power in Medieval France: Kingship, Crusades and the Jews* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 61–76; D. Malkiel, *Reconstructing Ashkenaz: The Human Face of Franco-German Jewry, 1000–1250* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); D. Müller, “Die Pariser Verfahren gegen den Talmud von 1240 und 1248 im Kontext von Papsttum und französischem Königtum,” in *Interaction Between Judaism and Christianity in History, Religion, Art and Literature*, ed. M. Poorthuis, J. Schwartz, and J. Turner (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 181–99; U. Ragacs, *Die zweite Talmuddisputation von Paris 1269* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2001); J. Shatzmiller, *La deuxième controverse de Paris: un chapitre dans la polémique entre chrétiens et juifs au Moyen âge* (Louvain: Peeters, 1994); H. Soloveitchik, “Catastrophe and Halakhic Creativity: Ashkenaz—1096, 1242, 1306 and 1298,” *Jewish History* 12 (1998): 71–85.

On *Birkat Haminim* and the Talmud Trial, see Langer, *Cursing the Christians?*, 85–88.

According to the Hebrew account of the 1240 Talmud Trial, the punishment of the wicked to be doomed to “excrement that seethes” is also mentioned. Nicolas Donin claimed that the Jews wrote in the Talmud that Jesus was condemned to boiling hot excrement, and on the basis of the Talmud, Balaam’s punishment is ascribed to Jesus.<sup>45</sup> In the Jewish tradition, Balaam is sometimes replaced with Bela ben Beor, the first king of Edom. Therefore, Balaam is identified both with Esau and Jesus. Hence, when the Talmud mentions the punishment of Balaam and the criminals of Israel as being punished “with boiling hot excrement,” it refers to Jesus.<sup>46</sup>

Therefore, we can see in this statement in *Meshal Haqadmoni* a reference to the Paris Talmud Trial and to the punishment of Balaam/Jesus. Even if this notion was not actually raised in the Talmud Trial itself and is recorded only in the later written text, there is important value to its inclusion in the Hebrew account. While it may have been written some decades after 1240,<sup>47</sup> nonetheless it had been written (and probably widespread) by 1280, when Ibn Sahula wrote *Meshal Haqadmoni*. Hence, whether or not these exact words were mentioned in the actual Talmud Trial is of less importance to our discussion than the fact that they appear in the account written before Ibn Sahula wrote his book.

Returning to the illumination of *Cántiga 34*, the fact that the icon of Virgin and Child is desecrated by being thrown into the lavatory seems to indicate a Jewish intention to punish Jesus and Mary with “excrement that seethes.” This kind of abuse could show the punishment that the Virgin and Child deserve in the eyes of the Jews, when at the end of the story the Jew is condemned to hell. The story in *Cántiga 34* is not the only one in the *Cántigas de Santa Maria* to display Jewish mockery of Christian symbols. The Christian notion in this book is that the Jews are allegedly already trying to implement the Talmud’s ideas about the punishment of the wicked.

In *Cántiga 12* we are told that the Jews of Toledo were caught by the Archbishop and his congregation as they were spitting at and cursing a wax image

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45 Cf. G. Dalman, *Jesus Christ in the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar and the Liturgy of the Synagogue* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 10, 12, 17–18; Eisenberg, “Reading Medieval Religious Disputation,” 84–88; Galinsky, “The Different Hebrew Versions,” 122; Marcus, “A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis,” 176–82; P. Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 82–94.

46 Cf. G. Cohen, “Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought,” in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 19–48.

47 Cf. Eisenberg, “Reading Medieval Religious Disputation,” 38–40; Hames, “Reason and Faith,” 276–77, 281, n. 39.

of Jesus and later placing him on an improvised cross.<sup>48</sup> The idea of Jews mocking a wax crucifix appears also in Alfonso X's book of law, *Las Siete Partidas*, 7.24.2,<sup>49</sup> where the king wrote that he had heard that in some places the Jews abduct Christian children on Good Friday and place them on a cross, but if they do not find such children, they create a wax image and crucify it. Alfonso X mentions that if these incidents turned out to be true in his kingdom, the Jews who carried them out would be executed. He also orders the Jews to stay behind closed doors on Good Friday.<sup>50</sup> Elliot Horowitz discusses at length cases in which Jews were accused of mocking the cross and testimonies of such actions appear in Jewish texts.<sup>51</sup>

The king's reference to this issue in his law book and in the *Cántigas de Santa Maria* indicates the prevalence of such stories. The fact that these incidents appear both in a popular illuminated book of poetry and in a book of law reinforces the notion that it is not merely a legend or rumor and suggests that they are true. Although Alfonso X wrote that he had heard rumors of such accusations, and did not report actual incidents in his kingdom, the fact that he enacted a law to be used in case such events occurred strongly suggests that the story represents a situation that could conceivably be faced.

Now let us turn to an altarpiece image from Catalonia, c. 1400, where we find an illustration to the well-known *Paris Tale* of 1290, where a Christian woman stole the Host and gave it to the Jewish pawn-man, who is seen here stabbing the Host and after throwing it into a boiling cauldron the image of Christ appears.<sup>52</sup>

The image here portrays simultaneous phases of the story, and notice how the Jewish boy resembles Jesus, as opposed to his dark skinned father. At the end, the mother and son convert and the father is executed. A similar story is found in a fifteenth-century liturgical drama; the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* was written in the East Midland dialect of Middle English not long after 1461, the year in which the event that is the central topic of the play is supposed

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48 Cf. Carpenter, "The Portrayal of the Jew," 19–20; Kulp-Hill, *Songs of Holy Mary*, 19; Mettmann, *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, 1:88–89; O'Callaghan, *The Learned King*, 111; Patton, *Art of Estrangement*, 88–91.

49 Cf. Carpenter, *Alfonso X and the Jews*, 63–66.

50 In 408 Theodosius II forbade the Jews from burning a figure like Haman on Purim, as it was understood to be mockery on the Crucifixion.

51 Cf. A. M. Haberman, *Sefer Gezerot Ashkenaz ve-Zarfat* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1945), 13–15; E. S. Horowitz, *Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 149–85. See also: R. Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 18.

52 Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 95–96.



**Fig. 3:** Altarpiece of the Virgin by Jaume Serra (1358–1389/95), Catalan painter, dated 14<sup>th</sup> century (detail).

**Source:** “Retaule de la Mare de Déu/Altarpiece of the Virgin.” Inventory number: 015916-CJT. Website of the Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya of Barcelona, [www.museunacional.cat](http://www.museunacional.cat). Accessed March 18, 2021.

to have taken place. The *Play of the Sacrament* is set in Aragon and tells the story of a miracle in which a rich Jewish merchant named Jonathas and his companions purchase the consecrated Host from a Christian merchant called Aristorius, and they subject it to a series of tests in order to determine the truth of the Christian claim that Christ is present in it, then the Jews convert.<sup>53</sup>

The local priest dines with Aristorius, suggestively on red wine and light bread, then retires to bed, leaving the church key with Aristorius, who promptly enters, steals the Host, and hands it over to Jonathas and his men. Jonathas and his colleagues rehearse the articles of Christian belief—Christ at the Last Supper, the establishment of the church, the virgin birth, the kingship and resurrection of Jesus, the apostolic mission. Then they stab the Host as it lies on a table and inflict the five wounds of Christ—reenacting the torture of Jesus. As Jonathas gives the fifth wound, in the center, the Host begins to bleed. Jonathas calls for help. He tries to throw the Host into a cauldron of boiling oil; it will not leave his hand,

<sup>53</sup> Cf. A. Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book: English Antisemitisms 1350–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

so they nail it to a board (thus mocking the cross). When they pull Jonathas away, his hand is torn off and left hanging with the crucified Host. Then enters a quack doctor, Magister Phisicus with his company, and offers their services to the Jews, who beat them away.

The Jews then pluck out the nails and throw both hand and Host, now coalesced, into the boiling oil. Jonathas, asked for his advice, Jonathas kneels before him, as do the others, and they address Jesus in the language of poetic penance. He accepts their conversion and restores Jonathas' hand to his arm. Afterwards Jonathas and his men go to the bishop and proclaim the miracle, and the bishop goes to their house and sees the image of Christ change back into bread, the Host. The merchant Aristorius confesses his unlawful bargain to the priest. All go to church with the bishop, who lays the Host on the altar. He then baptizes the Jews, and all sing the *Te Deum*.<sup>54</sup>

According to David Bevington, the play was probably performed during the *Feast of Corpus Christi* and that the last scene takes place in church, thus the audience could have felt like experiencing an actual liturgical ceremony instead of a merely a play. He even mentions a demonstration of the Mass at the medieval conference in Kalamazoo, where

the many members of religious orders who were there all stood or knelt at the appropriate times as the Mass was sung, so that one could never be sure whether one was beholding a Mass or a theatrical event.<sup>55</sup>

He compares the modern experience to that of the medieval audience.

Now let us move beyond the medieval period to the twenty-first century. As part of the production of the *Blood Project*,<sup>56</sup> the play was staged in Oxford on January 10, 2004. Here we start with an opening of a puppet show, where the Jew wears a yellow star and the players performing the role of the Jew all wear black with yellow gloves. This stereotypical color to portray the Jews reveals more on the modern audience rather than the medieval past.

According to the director in the program:

Our aim in staging the Croxton Play of the Sacrament is not to endorse its objectionable and fantastical images of Jews, but to expose them. In order to expose the Jewish caricature we have followed its exaggeration in the Croxton Play. We have adopted a self-consciously the-

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. D. A. Lawton, "Sacrilige and Theatricality: The Croxton Play of the Sacrament," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33 (2003): 287–88.

<sup>55</sup> D. Bevington, "Staging and Liturgy in *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament*," in *Staging Scripture: Biblical Drama 1350–1600*, ed. P. Happé and W. Hüsken (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 241.

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.thebloodproject.net/performance/> (no longer available).

atrical style in acting and costumes, which also play on medieval Christian symbolism: yellow, the colour of perfidy, was frequently used in portrayals of Jews.

The play was reviewed by Angie Johnson in *The Oxford Times*:

It’s a curious piece. In this apparently anti-Semitic play the secular Christian characters are, in my opinion, much more wicked, and when this was written the Jews had long been expelled from England. This leads to some dubious characterisations—at one point the Jews thank Mohammed!<sup>57</sup>

Both in Alfonso X’s book and in the play, the actual story happens in a city or a country far from the origin of the place where the story/play was written. This could hint at a larger understanding of the so called “Jewish conspiracy” to harm the body of Jesus and to desecrate the Host in a reenacting a ritual similar to the crucifixion and the church Mass. We need to point at an important difference between the two, and that is that while in Castile the Jews were very much present in Alfonso X’s court, the Jews of England were expelled in 1290, and there was not a single Jew living in England during the time the play was written. Hence, in the English play the imagined rituals of the Jews are received as facts known from outer sources and the “hermeneutical Jew,” to use Jeremy Cohen’s term,<sup>58</sup> is intended to better reinforce the stance of the “Real Presence of Christ in the Mass” at the time and place where it was written. A similar understanding of the play is articulated in Anthony Bale’s comments on it, in his summary of the play’s modern production. In both cases, the performance is intended for a Christian audience with a clear agenda, and it may teach us nothing about actual Jewish rituals, but we do realize how they were perceived.

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57 A. Johnson, “Miracle Play Proves a Curious Piece—Croxtton Play of the Sacrament,” *Oxford Mail*, January 16, 2014, [https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/leisure/theatre/theatre/reviews/10941353.Miracle\\_play\\_proves\\_a\\_curious\\_piece\\_\\_Croxtton\\_Play\\_of\\_the\\_Sacrament/](https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/leisure/theatre/theatre/reviews/10941353.Miracle_play_proves_a_curious_piece__Croxtton_Play_of_the_Sacrament/).

58 Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law*.

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Birgit Wiedl

## Anti-Jewish Legislation in the Middle Ages

In contrast to today's conception of a unified and uniting legal system, it was common for medieval societies to have several legal systems "at work" at the same time. Some of these legal authorities followed an hierarchical order, such as imperial/royal law that stood above the legislation enacted by territorial princes (at least in theory), who, as town lords, in return could change, overturn, or dictate municipal law. Parallel to these secular legal systems, church law was enforced by an equally graded system of hierarchies, while the vast field of customary laws is particularly difficult to grasp due to its vast diversity and mostly oral tradition. Inhabitants of medieval cities and rural communities were therefore subjected to several legal systems: the general law of the country (often a non-codified customary law), the municipal law of the respective city, several sets of ecclesiastical regulations, and depending on their profession, they could be subjected to regulations of a specific organisation (e.g., universities or craft guilds).

This legal pluralism applied to Jews as well—they were granted their main legal standing from the respective ruler (see below); furthermore, they were permitted to enact their own halachic legislation within their communities. Their particular legal status, however, did not mean that Jews were exempt from other jurisdictional systems. They bought and sold their estates and properties according to the respective municipal and/or customary laws, paid and received dues and rents, and appeared as plaintiffs and defendants before all kinds of courts, showing them as more than passive recipients: they were active players who were not only aware of their legal circumstances but were also able to navigate within these frameworks.<sup>1</sup>

Anti-Jewish legislation is therefore only a part of medieval Jewry laws, and a part that existed parallel, and often in contrast to a neutral, or even positive legislation. It is also only a part of medieval anti-Jewish thought and agenda to which it contributed both ideas and measures to act upon. This essay cannot and does not claim to cover anti-Jewish legislation in medieval Europe exhaustively; in particular, the very diverse municipal and customary laws will be presented with a focus on the Ashkenazi regions of the Holy Roman Empire.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. B. Wiedl, "...und kam der jud vor mich ze offens gericht. Juden und (städtische) Gerichtso-  
brigkeiten im Spätmittelalter," *Mediaevistik. Internationale Zeitschrift für Interdisziplinäre Mit-  
telalterforschung* 28/2015 (2016): 243–68.

## Church Legislation

Based on the Pauline concept of the Jews' special role in Christian salvation history, their role as witnesses of the past and their forthcoming conversion that would announce the end of times meant that their survival was necessary until Doomsday, a concept that was mainly stipulated by Church Father Augustine (d. 430).<sup>2</sup> Thus, papal protection of the Jews was deemed essential already by the sixth-century's Pope Gregory I in his condemnation of forced baptism, who, in the form of the *Sicut Iudeis* bull, would grant the Jews the right to practise their religion uninhibited and would shield them from forced baptism, from violence against their lives, synagogues, and cemeteries, as well as (added later) from ritual murder accusations (blood libel).<sup>3</sup> The second concept is rooted in the damnation of the Jews in St. John's Gospel: in the refusal of Christ, Jews had proved to be the eternal enemies of Christ and Christendom and had thus been condemned to perpetual servitude.<sup>4</sup> These two contradictory positions and their potential reconciliation were discussed in theological writing from late antiquity onwards, such as by Augustine who emphasised the Jews' function as witness bearers for the Old Testament but also underlined their (deliberate) obduracy and blindness toward Christ.

Many of the anti-Jewish sentiments that found their way into canon law and ecclesiastical legislation had their roots in late antique and early medieval synods and councils<sup>5</sup> as well as papal decrees and letters. Up until the twelfth century, ecclesiastical legislation did not claim immediate jurisdiction over Jews (and other non-Christians) but tried to achieve control over them by regulating the Christians' conduct: by inducing fear of the scheming and malevolent Jews

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<sup>2</sup> For the vast literature on Augustine, see the fundamental study by J. Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); and the two contributions by T. Raveaux, "Das Judenbild bei Augustinus," and C. Cluse, "'Töte sie nicht!' Echos der Augustinischen Theologie über die jüdische 'Zeugenschaft' im Mittelalter," both in *Augustinus – Christentum – Judentum: Ausgewählte Stationen einer Problemgeschichte*, ed. C. Müller and G. Förstner (Würzburg: Augustinus bei echter, 2018), 49–80 and 113–55, both with further literature.

<sup>3</sup> First issued by Pope Callixtus II in ca. 1120, most medieval popes re-issued the *Sicut iudeis* bull, cf. S. Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews: Documents, 492–1404* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988), 68, 143, 211, 242, 245–46, 249, 254, 260, 265, 396, 430, 507.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. S. Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations, 1000–1300: Jews in the Service of Medieval Christendom* (London: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. F. J. E. Boddens Hosang, *Establishing Boundaries: Christian-Jewish Relations in Early Council Texts and the Writings of Church Fathers* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

but also by threatening those Christians who kept company with the Jews with dire consequences up to excommunication.

In the mid-twelfth-century *Decretum Gratiani*, a compilation of canon law,<sup>6</sup> the many articles concerned with Jews<sup>7</sup> cover a wide range of regulations that could be in some parts inconsistent, and even contradictory, due to the collection's compiled nature. The Jews' continuous existence and the necessity of their protection is affirmed. The topics of Christian slaves in Jewish households and conversion are treated with the interest of the church in mind (e.g., awarding child custody to the converted spouse) and forbid (and, if, occurring, sanction) apostasy. In particular, conversion was a main concern of the church in many aspects—the (il)legality of forced baptism and whether to allow those affected to return to their old faith; whether converted Jews should, as per Jewish law, lose their possessions, and who was to care for them if they did; and whether to regard recidivists as heretics: all these questions would remain key issues for ecclesiastical thought and legislation until and beyond the Late Middle Ages.<sup>8</sup> While not all of these discussions were inherently anti-Jewish, they perpetuate the Christian fantasies of lapsed converts or even fake conversions, as well as

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**6** In addition to the basic survey by H. Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld*, 3 vols. (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1991–1999), F. Lotter has given an overview over ecclesiastical legislature concerning Jews from the Merovingian era to the High Middle Ages, published posthumously in *Aschkenas* 28, no. 2 (2018): “Die Stellung der Juden im Merowingerreich nach dem Zeugnis der Synodalakten,” 175–216; “Die Juden im Decretum Gratiani,” 217–81; “Die Juden in den späteren kanonistischen Rechtssammlungen,” 282–336. Cf. also A. S. Abulafia, “Gratian and the Jews,” *Jaarboek Thomas Instituut te Utrecht* 36 (2017): 9–39. Medieval canon law and its manifold concerns with Jews (as well as Pagans and Muslims) has become a core source for studies on post-colonialism and othering, for example, J. Lopez, “Beyond Eurocentrism and Orientalism: Revisiting the Othering of Jews and Muslims through Medieval Canon Law,” *Review of International Studies* 42, no. 3 (2016): 450–70.

**7** See the tabellary overviews by Lotter, “Juden im Decretum Gratiani,” 265–81, with references to earlier regulations.

**8** Much has been published on both Jewish conversion itself and the Christian concepts, see among many S. Goldin, *Apostasy and Jewish Identity in High Middle Ages Northern Europe: ‘Are you still my brother?’*, trans. J. Chipman (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014); A. Haverkamp, “Baptised Jews in German Lands during the Twelfth Century,” in *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. M. A. Signer and J. Van Engen (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 255–310; J. Shatzmiller, “Jewish Converts to Christianity in Medieval Europe 1200–1500,” in *Cross Cultural Convergences in the Crusader Period: Essays Presented to Aryeh Grabois on His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. M. Goodich, S. Menache, and S. Schein (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 297–318. On return and conversion to Judaism, see more recently P. Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision, and Ritual Murder in Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

Jewish proselytism. The fateful late medieval view of forced baptism as legitimate, and the subsequent damnation (and execution) of returned converts, had its roots in these earlier discussions.

However, the *decretum* also incorporated central anti-Jewish ideas, which had been previously discussed in theological writings, such as the Jews' obduracy and deliberate blindness toward Christ,<sup>9</sup> a concept that was translated into visual renditions in form of the blindfolded, defeated *Synagoga* who, together with the triumphant *Ecclesia*, would grace numerous medieval churches and manuscripts and thus made it accessible to and understandable for the populace.<sup>10</sup> The *decretum* warned against any too-close Jewish-Christian interaction, such as consulting with Jewish doctors, and simply living and dining together. Particularly the consumption of "Jewish" (i. e., kosher) food by Christians had already been a major concern of councils and synods of the early Middle Ages and would reappear in later councils and synods that cautioned Christians against buying or accepting wine and meat from Jews, with the warning that the Jews would seek to poison them.<sup>11</sup> Ample room is given to the concept of the Jews as the killers of Christ, dealing not only with the theological idea of the Jews' perpetual damnation as a just punishment for their inexcusable misdeed but also its "real-world" translation: that this punishment should be meted out by another people, namely God's new people, that is, the Christians.<sup>12</sup> Together with excommunicated individuals, heretics, slaves, and heathens, Jews were subsumed under the dishonourable who were denied the right to sue against clerics/Christians, under the proposition that plaintiffs had to be of equal or higher standing to the defendant, a concept that ties in with the idea that

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<sup>9</sup> See particularly Peter the Venerable's *Against the Inveterate Obduracy of the Jews*, trans. and annotated by I. M. Resnick (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Literature on *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga*, particularly as statues, is vast; see N. Rowe, *The Jew, the Cathedral, and the Medieval City: Synagoga and Ecclesia in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); A. Weber, "Glaube und Wissen—*Ecclesia* et *Synagoga*," *Wissenspopularisierung: Konzepte der Wissensverbreitung im Wandel*, ed. C. Kretschmann (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2003), 89–126; B. Wiedl, "Jews and Anti-Jewish Fantasies in Christian Imagination in the Middle Ages," in *Imagination and Fantasy in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time: Projections, Dreams, Monsters, and Illusions*, ed. A. Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 578–84, 589–95.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. C. Magin, "*Wie es umb der iuden recht stet*": *Der Status der Juden in spätmittelalterlichen deutschen Rechtsbüchern* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1999), 332–43; D. M. Freidenreich, "Sharing Meals with Non-Christians in Canon Law Commentaries, Circa 1160–1260: A Case Study in Legal Development," *Medieval Encounters* 14 (2008): 41–77; I. M. Resnick, "Dietary Laws in Jewish-Christian Polemics: A Survey," *Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations* 6 (2011): 1–15.

<sup>12</sup> Lotter, "Juden im *Decretum Gratiani*," 250–52.

Jews should not hold power over or assume higher positions than Christians.<sup>13</sup> Several of the conclusions presented in the *decretum* are openly hostile: Jews were not the sons of Abraham but of the devil—if not in blood, then in their deeds; they are not merely as bad as sodomites but worse.<sup>14</sup>

From the late twelfth century onwards, papal legislation expanded its claim to include non-Christians living among Christianity in their jurisdiction.<sup>15</sup> The provisions of the Third Lateran Council (1179) show the transition state: Christians living in Jewish households were to be excommunicated and Jews were not allowed to employ Christian servants. To emphasise the higher standing Christians had, Christian testimony in court should be of higher value than Jewish testimony. The secular authorities were charged with protecting converts who were not to lose their possessions.

With the rule of Pope Innocent III (1198–1216), the Augustinian concept of the Jews' perpetual servitude was transferred from its theological into the legal, economic, and social domain where it would be put into practice within the framework of Jewish-Christian interaction.<sup>16</sup> This new interpretation was first verbalised in a letter from Innocent III to two French bishops in which he not only emphasised the yoke of Jewish servitude, which they were never allowed to discard, and the need for their gratitude, but translated these ideas into political reality by employing the French king and his nobility to carry out the regulations and curb the Jews' excesses.<sup>17</sup> This shift in interpretation, along with the church's newfound attempts of jurisdiction over the Jews, would serve to enhance the conflict between church and secular rulers who themselves lay claim to the lordship over the Jews.

Perhaps the most fateful milestone in anti-Jewish church legislation were the regulations of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), in the course of which the doctrine of transubstantiation was defined, which would impact the anti-Jewish narrative of host desecration. Whereas many of the council's provisions were drawn from older legislation, such as the prohibition of entrusting Jews with public of-

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13 The various canons compiled in the *Decretum* are somewhat inconsistent, some of them include the right to sue if said person had suffered damage in person, cf. Magin, "Wie es umb der iuden recht stet," 210–13.

14 Lotter, "Juden im Decretum Gratiani," 253.

15 On the development of this idea, see Magin, "Wie es umb der iuden recht stet," 23–26; cf. also A. Fidora, "Latin Talmud and the Extension of Papal Jurisdiction over Jews," *medieval worlds: comparative & interdisciplinary studies* 11 (2020): 159–60.

16 Magin, "Wie es umb der iuden recht stet," 21; Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations*, 74.

17 Cf. Schreckenber, *Adversus Judaius*, 2:408–11; J. Heil, "Gottesfeinde"—"Menschenfeinde": *Die Vorstellung von jüdischer Weltverschwörung (13. bis 16. Jahrhundert)* (Essen: Klartext, 2006), 189–90.



fices<sup>18</sup> that should prevent Jews from holding power over Christians, Lateran IV aimed directly at the Jews themselves, their behaviour, and their public appearance: Jews were forbidden to demand excessive interest rates and any interest from crusaders; they were to stay indoors during Holy Week to refrain from mocking the mourning Christians; voluntary converts should not return to their Jewish faith (implying though that forced baptism was still considered invalid); and Jews as well as Muslims were required to wear distinguishing clothing, mainly to prevent “involuntary” sexual encounters with Christians.<sup>19</sup> The canons of Lateran IV were included in the *Liber Extra* (1234), the canonical collection of Pope Gregory IX that was to replace all former collections as a legal textbook of canon law.

After Lateran IV, regional councils and synods disseminated and further differentiated the canons and translated their rather general and still somewhat abstract concepts into practical advice on how to control (or, ideally, prevent) Jewish-Christian personal, social, and neighbourly interaction, thus immediately interfering with Jewish daily life.<sup>20</sup> Christians were forbidden to work and particularly live in Jewish households; they were warned against taking medicine from

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**18** The regulation dates back to the Third Council of Toledo (598), see Schreckenberg, *Adversus Judaios*, 1:418–19. Jews were (much to the church’s chagrin) active in various capacities, see M. J. Wenninger, “Juden als Münzmeister, Zollpächter und fürstliche Finanzbeamte im mittelalterlichen Aschkenas,” in *Wirtschaftsgeschichte der mittelalterlichen Juden: Fragen und Einschätzungen*, ed. M. Toch (München: Oldenbourg, 2008), 121–89; for Jews as mint-masters, cf. E. Haverkamp, “Jüdische Münzmeister und ihre Münzen im Kontext von Handel und Geldhandel,” in *Geprägte Bilderwelten der Romanik: Münzkunst und Währungsräume zwischen Brixen und Prag*, ed. F. Hofer et al. (Bolzano: Athesia Tappeiner Verlag, 2017), 155–91; E. Haverkamp, “Jewish Images on Christian Coins: Economy and Symbolism in Medieval Germany,” *Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe: The Historiographical Legacy of Bernhard Blumenkranz*, ed. P. Buc, M. Keil, and J. Tolan (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 189–226; and as tax collectors at the Hungarian and Austrian courts, cf. N. Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims and ‘Pagans’ in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000–c. 1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 101–8, 127–31; E. Brugger, “Von der Ansiedlung bis zur Vertreibung: Juden in Österreich im Mittelalter,” in *Geschichte der Juden in Österreich*, ed. E. Brugger et al. (Wien: Ueberreuter, 2013), 141–42.

**19** Specific clothing was often used as a distinguishing and/or social marker, cf. R. Jütte, “Stigma-Symbole: Kleidung als identitätsstiftendes Merkmal bei spätmittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Randgruppen (Juden, Dirnen, Aussätzigen, Bettler),” *Saeculum* 44, no. 1 (1993): 65–89.

**20** Cf. the collection *Corpus der Quellen zur Geschichte der Juden im spätmittelalterlichen Reich*, coord. A. HAVERKAMP and J. MÜLLER, Trier, from 2011 onwards, <http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/quellen/1273-1347/sk01.html>. All further quotations of SK01 (plus the respective number) refer to this collection, the corresponding entries have been authored by R. Richtscheid.

or visiting Jewish doctors,<sup>21</sup> buying the Jews' (poisoned) meat and, of course, from having sexual intercourse with Jews.<sup>22</sup> Jewish space and movement within a city was limited and controlled: Jews were banned from places of particular close encounters, namely bath houses and taverns, and from social acts that carry a strong ritual connotation, such as dining, celebrating, and dancing with Christians.<sup>23</sup> On Good Friday, or whenever the Eucharist (i.e., the Host wafer) was carried past, Jews were forbidden to leave their houses, or even to look through their windows, and during Lent, they were not allowed to transport meat. The limitations of public appearance reflects several anti-Jewish ideas: the spiteful Jew who mocks the Christians during their high holidays but also the Jewish seducer who tries to con Christians into breaking their religious rules. The Christian fantasy of Jews seducing Christians appears also in the church's mistrust concerning conversion that went two ways: Jews were suspected of hindering baptisms and were thus ordered to not interfere, particularly with female and juvenile converts, but were also thought to actively proselytize. To prevent any doubt of their own faith in Christians (and, ultimately, conversion to Judaism), Jews were forbidden to conduct religious debates with "simple" Christians, including illiterate priests.<sup>24</sup> In addition to regulating Jewish life and behaviour, the church extended its grasp onto the synagogues. Communities were barred from erecting new synagogues and were forbidden to alter the height or size of those already in existence.<sup>25</sup>

Lateran IV had introduced the mandatory distinguishing marker that Jews (and Muslims) had to wear to canon law, yet had lacked any specific description of this item. In central Europe, most provincial and regional synods took up this idea of a "Jewish" attribute to make them distinguishable from Christians.<sup>26</sup> Any "disguise" was seen as particularly improper and audacious: the "blasphemers

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**21** Councils of Wroclaw and Vienna 1267, cf. E. Brugger and B. Wiedl, *Von den Anfängen bis 1338*, vol. 1 of *Regesten zur Geschichte der Juden in Österreich im Mittelalter* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2005), 59–61, no. 45; Trier [1278], SK01, no. 2.

**22** Wroclaw and Vienna 1267, cf. Brugger and Wiedl, *Regesten*, 1:59–61, no. 45; Trier 1310 (sexual intercourse of a Christian man with a Jewish, Saracen, or Pagan woman) SK01, no. 9.

**23** Wroclaw and Vienna 1267, Brugger and Wiedl, *Regesten*, 1:59–61, no. 45. For Christians as guests at Jewish festivities cf. M. J. Wenninger, "als etlich kristen lüt...mit dien Juden getanzet hant: Über die Teilnahme von Christen an jüdischen Festen im Mittelalter," *Aschkenas* 26, no. 1 (2016): 37–67.

**24** Wroclaw and Vienna 1267, Brugger and Wiedl, *Regesten*, 1:59–61, no. 45, Mainz 1274/75 and 1310, SK01, no. 1, no. 10, illiterate priests: Trier [1278], SK01, no. 2.

**25** Wroclaw and Vienna 1267, Brugger and Wiedl, *Regesten*, 1:59–61, no. 45, Bressanone 1318, SK01, no. 11, and possibly Wroclaw 1331, SK01, no. 12a (unclear due to loss of text).

**26** Aschaffenburg 1292, SK01, no. 5, Bressanone 1318, SK01, no. 11.

of Christ” even dared to wear cowls like clerics, the constitutions of the bishop of Wroclaw complained in 1331, and explicitly forbade Jews who wore such a cowl to participate in the public space of the market.<sup>27</sup> While most of these synods merely refer to “distinguishing garbs,” the Councils of Wroclaw and Vienna, held a few months apart in 1267 by the papal legate Guido, defined the object in detail: the *pileus cornutus*, the pointed Jewish hat, a headgear the Jews had “worn in earlier times in these regions, but had dared to discard.” While the Jewish hat therefore acquired the more derogatory connotation of a mandatory attribute in the context of church law and was used as a symbol of shame also in Christian context,<sup>28</sup> it is important to note that the hat appears to have stemmed from Jewish traditional costume,<sup>29</sup> and served in central European Christian art also as a neutral, even appreciatory indicator of a person’s Jewishness (e.g., the famous depiction of the “Jewish” poet Süßkind of Trimberg);<sup>30</sup> it was also used by Jews as a self-identifier in manuscripts and on seals.<sup>31</sup>

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27 Wroclaw 1331, SK01, no. 12a.

28 It was common to “mark” Christian women who had sexual relationships with Jewish men, cf. N. Schnitzler, “*Contra Naturam*’—Sexuelle Devianz und jüdisch-christliche Koexistenz im Mittelalter,” in *Wechselseitige Wahrnehmung der Religionen im Spätmittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. L. Grenzmann et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 275; S. Burghartz, “Juden – eine Minderheit vor Gericht (Zürich 1378–1436),” in *Spannungen und Widersprüche: Gedenkschrift für František Graus*, ed. S. Burghartz et al. (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1992), 235.

29 The debate to what extent Jews wore any headgear as part of their daily apparel is still ongoing, cf. S. Lipton, *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014), 16–45; E. Baumgarten, *Practicing Piety in Medieval Ashkenaz: Men, Women, and Everyday Religious Observance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 176–78.

30 Cf. UB Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 848, fol. 355r, <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg848/0705>.

31 E.g., in the famous zoocephalic Birds’ Head Haggadah, <https://www.imj.org.il/en/collections/199815>, and in the Leipzig Machsor, see K. Kogmann-Appel, *A Mahzor from Worms: Art and Religion in a Medieval Jewish Community* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), and illustration here: <http://davidkultur.at/artikel/das-8222ritual-des-ersten-lernens-zu-schawuot-im-mittelalter> (M. Keil, “Das ‘Ritual des ersten Lernens’ zu Schawuot im Mittelalter,” *David. Jüdische Kulturzeitschrift* 18, no. 69 [2006]: 5–7). For a Jewish seal with a Jewish hat, see the seals of the Regensburg Jew Peter bar Mosche, A. Lehnertz, *Corpus der Quellen*, 2014, JS01, no. 1, <http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/JS01/CP1-c1-02q7.html>, and the Augsburg Jew Lamblein, JS01, no. 8, <http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/JS01/CP1-c1-02q2.html>. A. Lehnertz, *Judensiegel im spätmittelalterlichen Reichsgebiet: Beglaubigungstätigkeit und Selbstrepräsentation von Jüdinnen und Juden*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2020).

In western Europe and Hungary,<sup>32</sup> the synods opted for a much more discriminatory identifier: in 1227, the Synod of Narbonne prescribed a distinguishing marker in the form of an oval badge, one finger in width and half a palm in height. In several shapes, and partly with the addition of the mandatory yellow (and sometimes red), the badge soon made its way into royal legislation: in 1228, King James I of Aragón ordered the Jews to wear it in public, more closely defined by John I in 1393 as a yellow and red wheel along with specific garments;<sup>33</sup> similarly, Alfonso X of Castile and Leon demanded distinguishing markers in 1263/65 (which were implemented only later). King Louis IX of France imposed a fine on all Jews who appeared in public without a *rouelle* (wheel) on their clothing in 1269 (which was reconfirmed in several church councils), while England's Jews were ordered by both royal (see below) and church law to wear a badge of yellow felt in the shape of two joined tables, mimicking those on which Moses had received the commandments. Hungarian Jews were required to wear a red, round cloth sown onto the left side of their outer garment (while Muslims and other non-Christians should wear a yellow mark) according to the Council of Buda in 1279.<sup>34</sup> While depictions of Jews in French, Spanish, and English art show these identifying markers, it is however unclear whether it actually had been translated into the Jews' everyday appearance. Already the Council of Zamora (1313) complains about the order not having been enforced in Castile; and in many instances, Jews were given special permission to discontinue wearing it. With (Anti-)Pope Benedict XIII, the badge was introduced into papal legislation in 1415, defining it as a yellow and red badge, which Jewish men were required to wear on their breast and Jewish women on their forehead. The bull of Benedict XIII (who was of Spanish origin and at the time back in Aragón) had limited influence in central Europe: the synod of Salzburg in 1418 reconfirmed the Jewish hat as compulsory (and added a bell for Jewish women), and even the Council of Basel/Florence, which during its long term (1431–1449) shifted from the more pro-Jewish stance of Martin V to a stricter policy (perhaps under the influence of Spanish delegates),<sup>35</sup> again referred to an unspecified “garment that distinguishes them from Christians.” However, in the course of the fifteenth century, the Jewish hat would disappear from central Europe and be replaced with the yellow badge (often introduced by

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32 The oft-cited “badge” for Erfurt in 1294 refers to the dress code implemented in the synod of Aschaffenburg (see above) of 1292 that only refers to “signs or garments” Jews should be required to wear.

33 Schreckenberg, *Adversus Judaius*, 3:412.

34 *Ibid.*, 3:279–80.

35 *Ibid.*, 3:494.

secular rulers); its appearances in German art at around 1470 clearly illustrate this change.<sup>36</sup>

Among the many anti-Jewish stereotypes ecclesiastical (and other) authors disseminated, the image of the Jewish usurer appears surprisingly scarcely in canon law and church legislation (but had a great influence on French and English royal policy, see below). Despite the canonical ban on interest-taking,<sup>37</sup> Christian moneylending business, both official and concealed, existed and drew scathing criticism from ecclesiastical authors. In that context, Jews were used as a negative foil, particularly in, but not limited to (polemical) preaching, where the Christian usurer was depicted as even more despicable than his Jewish counterpart.<sup>38</sup> With the late twelfth century, anti-usury agitation not only gained momentum but turned to direct attacks against the Jews, who with their presumed greed and lack of mercy toward their Christian victims literally embodied the equation of *usura* with robbery and fraud. Yet, regulations concerning Jewish interest-taking were rarely introduced in canon law: Lateran IV complained about the Jews' "grave and excessive interest rates" but sanctioned only their Christian business partners while the Second Council of Lyon (1274) promoted the expulsion of foreign usurers regardless of their faith (but was nevertheless utilised as a justification for the expulsion of Jews).<sup>39</sup> Likewise, the provincial

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**36** For example, on the broadsheet that illustrated the alleged host desecration in Passau (1477/78), see [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/11/Host\\_desecration1.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/11/Host_desecration1.jpg), and on a portable altar from Lower Austria, cf. Wiedl, "Jews and Anti-Jewish Fantasies," 596–97, with fig. 6.

**37** For a summary of this vast topic, see S. Schima, "Die Entwicklung des kanonischen Zinsverbots. Eine Darstellung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bezugnahmen zum Judentum," *Aschkenas* 20 (2010): 239–79.

**38** Cf. C. Cluse, "Zum Zusammenhang von Wuchervorwurf und Judenvertreibung im 13. Jahrhundert," *Judenvertreibungen in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. F. Burgard, A. Haverkamp, and G. Mentgen (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1999), 135–63; C. Cluse, "Jewish Moneylending in Dominican Preaching, Confession, and Counselling: Some Examples from Later Medieval Germany," in *Dominikaner und Juden. Personen, Konflikte und Perspektiven vom 13. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert/Dominicans and Jews: Personalities, Conflicts, and Perspectives from the 13th to the 20th Century*, ed. E. Füllenbach and G. Miletto (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 195–23; G. Mikosch, *Von alter ê und ungetriuwten Juden: Juden und Judendiskurse in den deutschen Predigten des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2010).

**39** Such as the (in)famous canon *Usurarum voraginem* of the Second Council of Lyon (1274), cf. R. Dorin, "Canon Law and the Problem of Expulsion: The Origin and Interpretation of *Usurarum Voraginem* (VI 5.5.1)," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte: Kanonistische Abteilung* 99, no. 1 (2013): 129–61.

synods of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries mostly resorted to a general damnation of usurers and their clientele.<sup>40</sup>

The imperial privilege for the Jews to clear themselves of the suspicion of having accepted stolen goods as pledges by taking an oath (“Statute of the Market,” see below), drew fierce criticism from the church primarily for one reason: popes Innocent III and Alexander IV, along with theologians, had been enraged by the idea that this “very old but truly diabolic law” would allow Jews to “be fattened and revel in luxury” (Peter the Venerable) since it enabled them to accept (stolen) liturgical objects as pledges.<sup>41</sup> Worries that sacred objects (and, with them, Christ himself) would suffer horrible mistreatment at the hands of the Jews, already expressed by sixth-century’s Gregory I,<sup>42</sup> were linked with scathing critiques of the Jews’ greed and the unjust law that made it impossible to demand the object back. Provincial synods more closely defined the objects that were under no circumstances to be pawned to Jews: particularly chalices,<sup>43</sup> but also crucifixes, books, and vestments<sup>44</sup> yet only rarely tried to abolish the statute itself.<sup>45</sup>

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**40** Trier [1278], SK01, no. 2. St. Pölden 1284, Brugger and Wiedl, *Regesten*, 1:79, no. 65, only the synods of Wroclaw and Vienna repeated Lateran IV’s canon and added the secular rulers’ duty to protect his Christian subjects against the Jewish frauds. The synod of Lüttich 1288 forbade advocates to represent usurers, heretics, and Jews against Christians unless explicitly ordered to do so by a judge, SK01, no. 4.

**41** Cf. J. Shatzmiller, “Church Articles: Pawns in the Hands of Jewish Moneylenders,” in *Wirtschaftsgeschichte der mittelalterlichen Juden: Fragen und Einschätzungen*, ed. M. Toch and E. Müller-Lackner (München: Oldenbourg, 2008), 93–102, with examples from France; J. R. Müller, “Zur Verpfändung sakraler Kultgegenstände an Juden im mittelalterlichen Reich: Norm und Praxis,” in *Pro multis beneficiis—Festschrift für Friedhelm Burgard: Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden und des Trierer Raums*, ed. S. Hirbodian et al. (Trier: Kliomedien, 2012), 190–93; Magin, “Wie es umb der iuden recht stet,” 361–66; on Peter the Venerable cf. Schreckenberg, *Adversus Judaius*, 2:180–96, quote on page 190; Cohen, *Living Letters*, 245–70; I. M. Resnick, “Peter the Venerable on the Talmud, the Jews, and Islam,” *Medieval Encounters* 24 (2018): 510–29.

**42** Cf. Shatzmiller, “Church Articles,” 95–97.

**43** Cf. Müller, “Verpfändung,” 190–93. Synods of Liegnitz 1285, SK01, no. 3a, Mainz 1302, SK01, no. 7, and Strasbourg [1341] and 1345, SK01, no. 13, no. 14.

**44** Mainz 1302, SK01, no. 7. Books were a particularly sensitive topic for both sides, cf. Müller, “Verpfändung,” (throughout the article); B. Wiedl, “Sacred Objects in Jewish Hands: Two Case Studies,” *Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe: The Historiographical Legacy of Bernhard Blumenkranz*, ed. P. Buc, M. Keil, and J. V. Tolan (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 72–75, from a Jewish perspective cf. M. Keil, “Heilige Worte, Schriften des Abscheus: Der Umgang mit Büchern als Paradigma des jüdisch-christlichen Spannungsverhältnisses,” *Text als Realie*, ed. K. Brunner and G. Jaritz (Wien: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2003), 49–61.

**45** Liegnitz 1285, SK01, no. 3a.

So that no Christian or Jew could plead ignorance, the council of Aschaffenburg ordered any rector of the province of Mainz should on four Sundays a year promulgate these ordinances in the vernacular during Mass.<sup>46</sup> Did those proclamations, however, mean that canon law had a huge impact on the living conditions and everyday life of medieval Jews? Repeated complaints about a lack of compliance (from both Christians and Jews) with the regulations suggest otherwise, yet the role of anti-Jewish resolutions in church law in the perpetuation of negative preconceptions of the Jews should not be underestimated, even if anti-Jewish sentiment was more successfully transmitted for the general public by means of narratives such as ritual murder allegations (blood libels) and accusations of host desecration. Later councils of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries added only a few new ideas, such as the council of Basel (1431–1449), that in their *canones* regarding the Jews of 1434, subjected the Jews to missionary sermons they had to listen to on a regular basis. A particular emphasis was put on as complete a separation as possible of Jewish and Christian lives: apart from the (already much repeated) ban on social encounters such as bathing and dining, Jewish living quarters were to be segregated from those of the Christians and as distant from churches as possible. In the thirteenth century, Jewish living space was, and remained, in the city centres, and the idea of a complete spatial separation had appeared only once, in the Council of Wroclaw in 1267 that even stipulated a physical barrier in form of a fence, wall, or trench between the two areas.<sup>47</sup> After the pogroms of the mid-fourteenth century, however, a tendency to relocate the Jews' allocated quarters to the fringes of the urban area is noticeable in several European towns.<sup>48</sup>

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**46** Aschaffenburg 1292, SK01, no. 5.

**47** J. Heil, "Die propagandistische Vorbereitung des Ghettos: Diskussionen um Judenquartiere," in *Frühneuzeitliche Ghettos in Europa im Vergleich*, ed. F. Backhaus et al. (Berlin: trafo, 2012), 155 points to an interesting bull by Pope Clement IV of the same time that only cautioned the Jews of Gniezno against erecting higher and more luxurious houses but clearly acts on the assumption that they remained in their living quarters. Cf. also H.-J. Becker, "Die Stellung des kanonischen Rechts zu den Andersgläubigen: Heiden, Juden und Ketzler," in *Wechselseitige Wahrnehmung der Religionen im Spätmittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. L. Grenzmann et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 117–18.

**48** Cf. H.-J. Gilomen, "Spätmittelalterliche Siedlungssegregation und Ghettoisierung, insbesondere im Gebiet der heutigen Schweiz," in *Abgrenzungen—Ausgrenzungen in der Stadt und um die Stadt*, vol. 3 of *Stadt- und Landmauern*, ed. Institut für Denkmalpflege an der ETH Zürich (Zürich: Hochschulverlag AG an der ETH Zürich, 1999), 85–106; Heil, "Vorbereitung des Ghettos," 159–60.

## Legislation of the Secular Rulers

From the ecclesiastical standpoint of the mid-twelfth century onwards, secular rulers would be obliged to carry out papal and other church regulations, thus recognising the church's supreme claim to lordship over the Jews. Many secular rulers were therefore reluctant to concede to the church's claim of supremacy, both as a tool in the ongoing power struggle between secular and ecclesiastical power, and because several of the church's provisions would run against their primary interest in the Jews, that is, their financial gain. Therefore, secular rulers not only procrastinated in carrying out the church's regulations but openly counteracted them, including a not-too-small number of ecclesiastical princes who, acting as rulers of their territory and (secular) lords over their Jews, followed their primary interest in the well-being of their country. The archbishop of Mainz, for example, abrogated his own command of a Jewish dress code in 1294, which he had enacted at the provincial council of Aschaffenburg only two years earlier, in order to facilitate an agreement between the municipality of Erfurt and the local Jewish community.<sup>49</sup>

The legal standing granted to medieval Jews by their respective secular rulers had a far more immediate impact on their everyday life since it defined the framework within which Jewish existence was possible. Its main features, developing both under the influence of and in competition with ecclesiastical regulations, were far more positive toward the Jews. Already in the Carolingian era, protection privileges were granted to individual Jews (but also other individuals). The imperial privileges of the late eleventh century to Rhineland communities<sup>50</sup> granted wide-ranging protection of Jewish life, property, and business, integrated ideas of Jewish law and adapted the general idea of protection as a core ideal of the ruler's duties toward his subjects.

In the wake of a ritual murder accusation in Fulda in 1235, Emperor Frederick II extended the privilege to all Jews of the Holy Roman Empire and defined the Jews' status as *servi camerae nostrae* ("servants of our chamber"), making them part of the imperial treasure, as did, in his legal succession, the terri-

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. M. Lämmerhirt, *Corpus der Quellen*, 2015, TW01, no. 58, <http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/TW01/CP1-c1-00os.html>; R. Richtscheid, "Judenbetreffe in Synodal- und Konzilsstatuten (1237–1347)," *Corpus der Quellen*, issued 2011, accessed October 27, 2020, <http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/SK01/einleitung.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Granted to the Jews of Speyer (1180, by Bishop Rudolf) and Worms (1090, by Emperor Heinrich IV), cf. M. Toch, *Die Juden im mittelalterlichen Reich* (München: Oldenbourg, 2013), 46–47.



torial princes who obtained the “right to the Jews” (*Judenregal*) in the course of the fourteenth century.<sup>51</sup> The Jews of France and England remained more closely bound to their respective kings due to the limited development of territorial lords. The majority of regulations enacted by secular rulers were protective privileges and aimed at promoting settlements by providing living conditions under which the (subsequently taxed) Jewish communities could flourish; anti-Jewish ideas can therefore rather be found in the rulers’ political actions than in their legislation, in selective measures that were often directed at specific individuals or groups and were, at least up until the mid-fourteenth century, predominantly (though not exclusively) politically and/or economically motivated. Thus, the political and economic development of the respective territory should be factored in in an analysis of these measures. Anti-Jewish decrees or actions of a ruler do not necessarily signify a general anti-Jewish disposition or policy: the same ruler could agree to a persecution in one city whose loyalty he wanted to gain and punish another for “damaging” his Jews (and thus his income), or annul an allegiant noble family’s debts and assist the Jews to collect their debts from another he deemed disloyal. With the late thirteenth century, the focus on promotion and protection shifted toward a more openly expressed economic interest which, in the course of the following century, turned into financial exploitation that was executed with measures of increasing violence, such as by the Habsburg dukes who incarcerated their Austrian Jews in 1377 and only released them after receiving ransom, or by a series of debt annulments issued by King Wenceslaus I in 1385 and 1390 that had devastating consequences for Jewish business.<sup>52</sup>

The dependency on the ruler’s protection placed all European Jews in a particularly precarious position should this protection wane, end, or even be turned against them. Whereas in the territories of the Holy Roman Empire, the rulers’ predominant financial interest—and thus an interest in thriving Jewish communities—made them the target of ecclesiastical polemics, which accused them of favouring the Jews in order to profit off their usury, the royal policy in France and England was more in accordance with church opinions and, while not exclusively aimed at the Jews, sought to limit moneylending. In France, the longstanding Capetian anti-usury policy reached its peak under the reign of exceedingly (and

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51 The discussion on Jewish service and *Kammerknechtschaft* is vast, cf. Toch, *Die Juden im mittelalterlichen Reich*, 48–49 (also on *Judenregal*) and 104–7.

52 Cf. Brugger, “Ansiedlung,” 220; K. Hruza, “Anno domini 1385 do burden die iuden ... gegangen. Die vorweggenommene Wirkung skandalöser Urkunden König Wenzels (IV.),” in *Wege zur Urkunde, Wege der Urkunde, Wege der Forschung: Beiträge zur europäischen Diplomatie des Mittelalters*, ed. K. Hruza and P. A. Herold (Wien: Böhlau, 2005), 117–67.

demonstratively so) pious King Louis IX whose fierce anti-Jewish stance also brought a heightened urgency to the crown's efforts to encourage the conversion of Jews (and Muslims)<sup>53</sup> and promoted the Disputation of Paris with its ensuing damnation and burning of the Talmud in 1242.<sup>54</sup> While (re)structuring France's financial management under a tight control of the crown, Louis reinforced his anti-usury policy by severely cutting down moneylending. The king's hostile policy culminated in the 1252 eviction decree for those Jews who would not abandon moneylending, the second expulsion of the French Jews after 1182 (after ritual murder accusations).<sup>55</sup> When the king's advisors contradicted the banishment, arguing that since moneylending itself was necessary, it would be better if the Jews, who were condemned anyway, did it than the Christians, Louis countered that the Jews' presence in France was his responsibility, and thus their usury would affect his soul.<sup>56</sup> In the following years, several confiscations of Jewish property filled the royal treasury, and as of 1269, French Jews were required to wear an identifying marker in shape of a yellow wheel (see above). After having been expelled for financial reasons in 1306, King Louis X allowed the Jews to return in 1315 under his protection of their lives and property, albeit with severe restrictions on settlement (limited to twelve years individually) and behaviour according to the ideas of canon law: a mandatory badge, no disputing matters of faith, and the continuing damnation of the Talmud. Similar inconsistencies resulting from a mixture of secular with church law can be seen in several of the western European countries, such as, Alfonso X's *Siete Partidas* for his Kingdoms of Castile and Leon (1263/65, achieving legal status in 1348) that included protection provisions as well as anti-Jewish regulations from canon law (no Christian servants, no shared meals, baths, and sexual encounters, no new synagogues).<sup>57</sup>

The Jews of England were not only under a tight royal control but incorporated into the crown's administration (which surpassed any secular administration on the continent in terms of efficiency and literacy). As early as late twelfth

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53 Cf. W. C. Jordan, *The Apple of His Eye: Converts from Islam in the Reign of Louis IX* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

54 Cf. Cohen, *Living Letters*, 317–25 on the church's part, particularly that of Nicolas Donin and Pope Gregory IX; cf. also Fidora, "Latin Talmud."

55 Cf. R. Chazan, *The Jews of Medieval Western Christendom, 1000–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 146–50.

56 For a survey, still see the fundamental study by W. C. Jordan, *The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989); further R. Chazan, *Reassessing Jewish Life in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 130–31.

57 Schreckenberg, *Adversus Judaius*, 3:287–90.

century, Jewish taxes and legal cases were administered by a specific office, the royal Exchequer of the Jews, and while not anti-Jewish in its purpose, its tallage-rolls house is one of the most strikingly anti-Jewish visual renditions: the infamous drawing of the Norwich Jews Isaac, Mosse-Mokke, and Abigail surrounded by demons.<sup>58</sup> Having been granted privileges in the course of the twelfth century<sup>59</sup>—the right to their own oath and their own court, the right to move around freely, along with economic provisions—the English Jewry flourished, which lay in the interest of the King: having defined them as his own property enabled him to tax them without permission of the Parliament. While the growing anti-Jewish sentiments, particularly the emerging blood libel, which led to mob violence against Jewish communities, were still countered by royal protection orders up until the early 1200s, the influence of anti-Jewish legislation, mainly imported from canon law, grew. Already in 1218, the Council of Regency, under pressure from the papal legate, ordered the Jews to wear a distinguishing garb (yet allowed dispensations to be bought), which was repeated in the Statute of Jewry (1253) of King Henry III. This Statute clearly demonstrated the dominating influence of ecclesiastical canons. While defining the Jews' rights of settlement as only in effect if (economically) beneficial for the crown, for the most part it repeated (and specified) Lateran IV's regulations and included measures that, in other territories, were rather found in regulations of post-Lateran IV synods: separation in order to prevent any close contact, no hindering of conversions, no new synagogues, no religious debates and disparaging remarks regarding Christianity, no buying and consumption of meat during Lent. In addition, the statute reprimanded the English Jews to lower their voices in the synagogue so that Christians could not hear them, an instruction King Henry translated into reality in 1272, when he gave a confiscated London synagogue to the Friars of the Sack who had complained about the "continuous wailing" from their Jewish neigh-

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**58** The cartoon (British National Archives, Kew, E.410/1565, Rolls of the Issues of the Exchequer, Hilary Term 1233) can be seen here: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/medieval-mystery/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/medieval-mystery/); A. Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book: English Antisemitisms, 1350–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2–4. On Bale's not entirely unproblematic differentiation between medieval anti-Judaism and antisemitism and the role of actual presence of Jews as a distinguishing element, cf. *ibid.*, 1–21. On the caricature, see also Lipton, *Dark Mirror*, 178–82.

**59** In the *Leges Edwardi Confessoris*, a collection of laws attributed to mid-eleventh century Edward I but not compiled until a century later, Henry I grants a series of rights to the London chief Rabbi Joseph and his followers. Translations and/or summaries of English Jewry-law have been provided in J. G. Hillaby and C. Hillaby, *The Palgrave Dictionary of Medieval Anglo-Jewish History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 17–37.

hours.<sup>60</sup> Jews were forbidden to enter churches and those Jews who lived outside of established communities had to obtain a royal licence. Henry's reinforced undertaking to promote conversion led to the foundation of the *Domus conversorum*, a London-based royal institution that took care of the newly converted.<sup>61</sup> Henry's successor Edward I, also in the light of a declining economic importance of the Jews (who had been financially exploited by both Henry and Edward) took up a royal anti-usury policy that had until then only been preached by synods and clerics: in his Statute of 1275, he demanded that since "he had seen that divers evils and the disinheriting of good men of his land have happened by the usuries which the Jews have made in time past," Jews should completely abandon moneylending, even if this would hurt the crown's revenues. Under continuing ecclesiastical influence, he also enforced the separation of Jewish and Christian living spaces by banning Christians from living among Jews while restricting Jewish settlement to royal cities only, and confirmed the mandatory yellow felt marker in form of two joined table.<sup>62</sup> Coin-clipping had become a major accusation against Jews (and Christians) over the past decades, and in 1278, all Jews of England were incarcerated due to this allegation, and many were subsequently executed.<sup>63</sup> Twelve years later, in his eviction decree, Edward cited the unwillingness of the Jews, "maliciously deliberating among themselves," to comply to the 1275 terms and depressing his subjects even further so that he "by reason of their errors and to the honour of Christ, has caused the Jews to leave his realm as perfidious men."<sup>64</sup>

The absence of anti-Jewish topics in (most of) the secular legislation of the Holy Roman Empire should not be taken for an absence of these ideas within

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**60** Cf. R. Stacey, "King Henry III and the Jews," *Jews in Medieval Christendom: "Slay Them Not,"* ed. K. T. Utterback and M. L. Price (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 121–22. Jewish voices and the Hebrew language was frequently likened to a dog's bark; fifteenth-century German author Michael Behaim, among others, pretended to hear "wailing, hellish cries, and dogs' barks" from the synagogue, cf. Heil, "*Gottesfeinde*"—"*Menschenfeinde*," 113; B. Wiedl, "Anti-Jewish Polemics in Business Charters from Late Medieval Austria," *Medieval Worlds: Comparative & Interdisciplinary Studies* 7 (2018): 61–79.

**61** Cf. L. Fogle, *The King's Converts: Jewish Conversion in Medieval London* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019). The English royal policy toward Jews has been interpreted in the context of post-colonial and race studies, mainly by G. Heng, *England and the Jews: How Religion and Violence Created the First Racial State in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), and an outtake of her encompassing study *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 55–109.

**62** Hillaby and Hillaby, *Dictionary*, 46–47.

**63** Hillaby and Hillaby, *Dictionary*, 103–9; Fogle, *King's Converts*, 41–42, 45; Heng, *England*, 39–41, with further literature. Christians too were accused of coin-clipping.

**64** Hillaby and Hillaby, *Dictionary*, 36–37.

secular rule. The expulsion decrees clearly demonstrate how permeated the Christian mindset was with anti-Jewish ideas, how easily these accusations, from counterfeiting to ritual murder and host desecration, were utilised as weapons, as was blatant financial gain. When (later) Emperor Maximilian I gave in to the pressure of the Styrian Estates and his financial desires and evicted the Styrian Jews in 1497, he listed all the anti-Jewish stereotypes that had caused violence against the Jews throughout the Middle Ages: their crimes and duplicity, the ritual murders and host desecrations they continued to commit, their counterfeiting and deceitful business practises that had caused many a noble family to perish. A few years earlier, a host desecration allegation had resulted not only in the deaths of twenty-seven Sternberg Jews but was followed by the expulsion of the Jews from the north-eastern territories—apart from the dukes of Mecklenburg in whose territory Sternberg was located, also the duke of Pomerania, the archbishop of Magdeburg (who had served as a judge in the trial at Sternberg) and his suffragans,<sup>65</sup> and the margrave of Brandenburg seized the opportunity, while circulating woodcuts, broadsheets, and incunables<sup>66</sup> spread the “reason” for their anti-Jewish policy.

## Customary and Municipal Law

### Customary Law

The status of Jews in medieval customary law(s) is even more diverse than in other legislation and, due to an at best fragmentary tradition of written records, even less traceable. Therefore, single law codes will serve as examples of how anti-Jewish legislation was represented in customary law in the realm of the Holy Roman Empire. Customary law was recorded from the late thirteenth century onwards in *Rechtsbüchern* (legal codices) and *Weistümern* (collections of

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. F. Backhaus “Die Hostienschändungsprozesse von Sternberg (1492) und Berlin (1510) und die Ausweisung der Juden aus Mecklenburg und der Mark Brandenburg,” *Jahrbuch für Brandenburgische Landesgeschichte* 39 (1988): 7–26; V. Honemann, “Die Sternberger Hostienschändung und ihre Quellen,” in *Literaturlandschaften: Schriften zur deutschsprachigen Literatur im Osten des Reiches*, ed. V. Honemann (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2008), 187–216.

<sup>66</sup> Already in 1492, the year of the alleged desecration and the trial, Magdeburg-based publisher Simon Koch printed an extensive rendition of the events, [http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/dms/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN656982853&DMDID=DMDLOG\\_0000](http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/dms/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN656982853&DMDID=DMDLOG_0000). The story became popular quickly and was included in the *Schedelsche Weltchronik* (Nuremberg Chronicle), an illustrated encyclopedia of world history, cf. B. Posselt, *Konzeption und Kompilation der Schedelschen Weltchronik* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015).

oral legal traditions), compilations of a mostly “private” nature<sup>67</sup> that reflect the customs of a locally restricted area in varying degrees of elaborateness; many of these codes exist in several renditions, which do not necessarily tally in their texts.<sup>68</sup> Most of these compilations drew from a variety of legal codes: canon and ecclesiastical law as well as secular law was combined with customary laws of the respective territory, in addition to that, older compilations were copied and rearranged. Topics covered in ecclesiastical and secular law were commented on, in addition to that, customary law also deal in more detail with social, legal, and economic matters which were only touched upon in “official” legislation. In her standard work on the Jews’ status in *Rechtsbüchern*, Christine Magin has categorised four main subject areas that are discussed in the legal codices: the social status of Jews; questions regarding conversion; procedural law; and Jewish trade and moneylending. All these topics were particularly controversial between ecclesiastical and secular legislation.<sup>69</sup>

Not all topics were presented with anti-Jewish intent, and compilers would deal with the same topic with varying attitudes. Already the question of the Jews’ general status was discussed with various approaches: the *Sachsenspiegel*, perhaps the most influential “German” legal code, stressed the Jews’ menial status yet also emphasised that harming a Jew would break the Imperial Peace. This refers to the inclusion of Jews in the First Imperial Peace of Mainz of 1103 that had put unarmed Jews,<sup>70</sup> together with clerics, women, merchants, and other vulnerable groups, under the heightened protection of the emperor. In the *Sachsenspiegel*, this specific status is connected with a legendary origin—Josephus and the healing of Titus—that drew from both Christian and Talmudic sources.<sup>71</sup> While other receptions focus on the anti-Jewish aspect of this legend and put it in context with the general idea of the Jews as a target of divine retaliation, the *Sachsenspiegel* links it with imperial legislation, and in further receptions of the *Sachsenspiegel*, this legend serves as the core explanation of the Jewish servitude

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67 For a critique of this term and the problematic opposition of private and official, cf. Magin, “*Wie es umb der iuden recht stet*,” 42–44, who emphasises that the compilations were often seen as official, valid law (with references to royal or imperial privileges and ordinances) and that the authors intended for their collections to be used and have a public impact.

68 Cf. *ibid.*, 41–42.

69 Cf. *ibid.*, 114.

70 On the debunking of the old perception that Jews were not allowed to bear arms, cf. the articles by C. Magin, “‘Waffenrecht’ und ‘Waffenverbot’ für Juden im Mittelalter: Zu einem Mythos der Forschungsgeschichte,” and M. J. Wenninger, “Von jüdischen Rittern und anderen waffentragenden Juden im mittelalterlichen Deutschland,” both in *Aschkenas* 13, no. 1 (2003): 17–33 and 35–82.

71 Cf. Magin, “*Wie es umb der iuden recht stet*,” 117–18.

(although with some variations and inconsistencies): the Jews saved by Josephus were transferred to the royal treasury by Titus, where they remained in perpetual servitude, an interpretation that ascribes the origin of the Jews' legal status Roman emperors and puts the Holy Roman Emperor in their direct legal succession. Other compilations draw explicit connections between the Jews' (and in some, also the heathens') "guilt" that made them property of the ruler, and the rulers' interest in economic gain.<sup>72</sup>

Particularly references to a perceived favouritism of the Jews, mainly with regard to legal and economic privileges, were delivered with a clear anti-Jewish intent: the discussion surrounding the Statute of the Market, the right of the Jewish pawnbrokers to clear themselves of the suspicion of having accepted stolen goods as pledges by taking an oath.<sup>73</sup> This right had first been granted in Emperor Henry IV's privilege for the Jews of Worms in 1090 and had been adapted by most territorial rulers of the Holy Roman Empire throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>74</sup> Theologians had for a long time been labelling the statute particularly unjust since it allowed the Jews' business practices for which Christians were hanged (see above).<sup>75</sup> These sentiments were reflected in several legal codes of customary law<sup>76</sup> that focused on this perceived injustice of the Jews' preferential rights, which the kings had "against justice" (*wider recht*) granted to them.<sup>77</sup> "The cursed Jews have much better rights towards the Christians than the Christians towards the Jews," the Viennese *Stadtrechtsbuch*, a privately commissioned compendium of Viennese customary law, ducal privileges, and decisions of the city council mixed with passages from the *Schwabenspiegel* from before 1360, describes the situation: Lawful it might be, yet not proper and fair, and by the use of emotive language, the author follows to paint the Christian as the impetuous victim and the Jewish moneylender as the rapacious predator, utilising anti-Jewish stereotypes that were common in both narratives and imagery.<sup>78</sup> Illustrations could add another layer of anti-Jewish sentiment: the Jew who is

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72 Cf. Magin, "Wie es umb der iuden recht stet," 124–35.

73 Cf. Toch, *Die Juden im mittelalterlichen Reich*, 109–10, also on the potential references to Jewish law and a Jewish participation in composing the privileges (with further literature).

74 For the ample discussion on the topic, see the overview by Magin, "Wie es umb der iuden recht stet," 352–400.

75 Cf. R. Chazan, *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 51. Shatzmiller, "Church Articles," 95–97 with examples from France; Müller, "Verpfändung sakraler Kultgegenstände," 190–93.

76 Cf. Magin, "Wie es umb der iuden recht stet," 366–72.

77 *Schwabenspiegel*, cf. Müller, "Jüdische Pfandleiher," 453; Abulafia, *Christian–Jewish Relations*, 55.

78 Wiedl, "Anti-Jewish Polemics," 67–68.

shown hanged or with his hand chopped off and a chalice next to him in several copies of the *Sachsenspiegel* evokes an image of a Jew being punished for his crime, lacking the qualifier of the written text (the possibility to present a warrantor).<sup>79</sup> The Jews' right to appear as plaintiffs in cases of bodily harm was not denied (or even seen as understood),<sup>80</sup> whereas the topic of Jewish testimony was mostly discussed in the (everyday) context of moneylending and pawn-broking. While most compilers merely gave an account of the possibilities of Jewish witness-bearing, several customary laws tried to exclude, or at least limit, Jewish testimony, and subsumed it under their criticism of the statute: the Jews had bought better rights for themselves from the king, summarizes the *Schwabenspiegel*.<sup>81</sup> Apart from the Statute of the Market, the selling of specific goods, namely meat, by Jews was a main topic discussed in both customary and municipal law (and its broad intersections, see below).

Court procedures often included the taking of an oath as a means of proof and corroboration, and Jews were required to participate in this.<sup>82</sup> As is the case with many other topics, the *Judeneid* cannot per se be seen as an element of Christian anti-Jewish action, as earlier studies have done. Oath-taking was common within the Jewish community (meaning, among Jews only),<sup>83</sup> and

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79 E.g. the *Heidelberger Sachsenspiegel*, UB Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 164, fol. 13v, <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg164/0040>; see Magin, "Wie es umb der iuden recht stet," 55; J. Shatzmiller, *Cultural Exchange: Jews, Christians, and Art in the Medieval Marketplace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 37–38; M. J. Wenninger, "Die Juden in den Bilderhandschriften des Sachsenspiegels," in *Integration und Ausgrenzung: Studien zur deutsch-jüdischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart. Festschrift für Hans Otto Horsch*, ed. M. H. Gelber, J. Hessing, and R. Jütte (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2009), 12. The *Sachsenspiegel* depicts Jews in both neutral and derogatory contexts: while the aforementioned armed Jew does not carry any anti-Jewish associations, a Jew is utilised to impersonate doubt/bad faith to illustrate the reason of "doubts of rightful belief" in the context of reasons for a legitimate papal excommunication of the emperor, see Wenninger, "Juden in den Bilderhandschriften," 12–13.

80 Cf. Magin, "Wie es umb der iuden recht stet," 234.

81 Cf. *ibid.*, 261.

82 Cf. G. Mentgen, "Judeneid," *Handwörterbuch der deutschen Rechtsgeschichte* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2011), 2:1409–11; A. Schmidt, "so dir got helfe. Die Judeneide," in *Juden in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters. Religiöse Konzepte—Feindbilder—Rechtfertigungen*, ed. U. Schulze (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2002), 87–105. For a brief summary on the vast discussion and its many remaining questions, cf. A. Lehnertz, "The Erfurt *Judeneid* between Pragmatism and Ritual: Some Aspects of Christian and Jewish Oath-Taking in Medieval Germany," in *Ritual Objects in Ritual Contexts*, ed. C. D. BERGEMANN and M. STÜRZEBECKER (Erfurt: Bussert & Stadeler, 2020), 12–31.

83 Cf. Lehnertz, "Erfurt *Judeneid*," 16–18.



also the specific set phrases Jews used in context of oath-taking at Christian courts had to draw from both Christian (customary) law and Jewish halachic law and custom to make the oath binding for both parties; rituals such as touching the doorknob of the synagogue had their counterpart in Christian ceremonies.<sup>84</sup> Neither ecclesiastical nor secular legislation occupied themselves much with the subject, the former occasionally doubting a Jew's oath's validity, the latter including the Jews' right to swear on the Torah in their privileges.<sup>85</sup> Several texts of Jewish oaths, as they were used in everyday practise, have been transmitted,<sup>86</sup> and many legal codes and municipal laws from the mid-thirteenth century onwards included both the wording of the oath (as it was custom in the respective town or region) and descriptions of the accompanying ceremony. While most of these renditions were neutral, particularly the latter served as a medium for anti-Jewish derisions: the Jew shall stand on a sow's hide, stipulates the *Schwabenspiegel*,<sup>87</sup> and illustrations in manuscripts<sup>88</sup> not only translated the written word into visual stimuli but emphasised the connotation with one of the major anti-Jewish images of the Middle Ages, the *Judensau*.<sup>89</sup> Other codes, such as the *Weichbildvulgata*, added specific clothing, often stressing that the Jew be barefoot, and a hat soaked in lamb's blood (or the sow's hide).<sup>90</sup> An early sixteenth-century rendition of the *Sachsenspiegel* (that in its medieval text versions does not contain the oath) even specifies the sow's hide: it should

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**84** Cf. *ibid.*, 12.

**85** Magin, "Wie es umb der iuden recht stet," 280–87.

**86** In addition to the Erfurt Judeneid, see the Jewish oaths of Krems and Vienna, cf. H. Voltelini, "Der Wiener und Kremser Judeneid," *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Wien* 12 (1932): 64–70. The Judeneid of Frankfurt exists in both a neutral and a derogatory version, cf. G. Grebner, "Haltungen zum Judeneid: Texte und Kontexte der Frankfurter Eidesformeln im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert," in *'...Ihrer Bürger Freiheit.'* *Frankfurt am Main im Mittelalter*, ed. H. Müller (Frankfurt/Main: Waldemar Kramer, 2004), 141–73; D. Schnur, *Die Juden in Frankfurt am Main und in der Wetterau im Mittelalter: Christlich-jüdische Beziehungen, Gemeinden, Recht und Wirtschaft von den Anfängen bis um 1400* (Wiesbaden: Kommission für die Geschichte der Juden in Hessen, 2017), 272–77.

**87** Cf. Schmidt, "Judeneide," 89–102; Magin, "Wie es umb der iuden recht stet," 291–97.

**88** *Schwabenspiegel*, KBR Royal Library of Belgium, ms. 14689–91, c. 1425/50, fol. 204r, <https://uurl.kbr.be/1065739>.

**89** Cf. I. Shachar, *The Judensau: A Medieval Anti-Jewish Motif and its History* (London: Warburg Institute, 1974); B. Wiedl, "Laughing at the Beast: The Judensau: Anti-Jewish Propaganda and Humor from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period," in *Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Epistemology of a Fundamental Human Behavior, its Meaning, and Consequences*, ed. A. Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 325–64.

**90** *Weichbildvulgata*, Schmidt, "Judeneide," 102–3; Magin, "Wie es umb der iuden recht stet," 307–8; the majority of manuscripts do not contain this paragraph.

stem from a sow that had farrowed within the past fortnight, and the hide should be cut along the back and spread out with the teats on the upper side.<sup>91</sup> But, were these deeply humiliating and ridiculing rituals ever enacted? *Dis ist ein fantasey*, “this is fantasy,” a commentator criticises the paragraph in his gloss to the *Weichbildvulgata* in 1557,<sup>92</sup> and between the two versions of the Jewish oath of Frankfurt, only the one without the addition of the sow’s hide was in actual use.<sup>93</sup>

Some legal codes discuss topics that are barely touched upon in others: for example, sexual relationships are not only discussed broadly in the *Schwabenspiegel*, its author also stipulates a much harsher punishment than the church: under canon law, only the female Christian offender is severely punished (flogging and expulsion) while the male Jew is due a monetary fine, the *Schwabenspiegel* wants both male Jew/female Christian and Jewess/male Christian to be bound together and burnt as a punishment for their adultery. In case of the Christians involved, disavowal of the Christian faith was added to the accusations; in doing so, the author linked sexual intercourse with a Jew/Jewess to heresy (which was punishable by burning).<sup>94</sup>

To prevent these and any other close contacts, canon law had as of 1215 required the Jews to wear a distinguishing marker. In western Europe, royal legislation took on the topic (see above), while in the Holy Roman Empire, secular legislators did not include any such regulations.<sup>95</sup> However, both distinguishing garbs in general and the common Jewish attribute of the area specifically, the Jewish hat, appeared in customary law in a variety of contexts. The *Sachsenspiegel* mentions—rather neutrally—Jews and clerics who were excluded from the Imperial Peace if they bore arms and did not wear their hair “according to their law”: the cleric’s tonsure and the Jew’s beard and hat, as the accompanying illustration shows.<sup>96</sup> The *Schwabenspiegel* demanded that Jews wear the Jewish

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91 Cf. Schmidt, “Judeneide,” 101–2.

92 Cf. *ibid.*, 103–4; Magin, “*Wie es umb der iuden recht stet*,” 316–17.

93 Cf. Schnur, *Juden in Frankfurt*, 272–77.

94 Cf. Magin, “*Wie es umb der iuden recht stet*,” 160–61, n. 162.

95 Cf. *ibid.*, 158.

96 *Heidelberger Sachsenspiegel*, UB Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 164, <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg164/0038>; Magin, “*Wie es umb der iuden recht stet*,” 158; Wenninger, “Juden in Bilderhandschriften.” Sexual relationships between Jews and Christians did of course occur, cf. the examples given by Burghartz, “Juden—eine Minderheit;” Schnitzler, “‘*Contra Naturam*’;” and J. Müller, “Sexual Relationships between Christians and Jews in Medieval Germany, According to Christian Sources,” in *History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Jewish Society*, vol. 2 of *Iggud: Selected Essays in Jewish Studies*, ed. G. Bacon et al. (Jerusalem: Gefen Books, 2009), 19–32.

hat at all times and in all cities, while some copies of the *Weichbildvulgata* (Magdeburg, late thirteenth, early fourteenth century), and the legal code of Meißen (1357/87) that Jews were not allowed to leave the synagogue without wearing the Jewish hat,<sup>97</sup> and the Jews of Augsburg had to wear the hat when selling their goods at the market (see below).

## Municipal Law

The differentiation between customary law, municipal law, and laws of a secular ruler is vague at best—customary laws of a city were recorded from oral tradition, while codified municipal law was often issued by the lord of the town who would either pander to the citizens' wishes or put up a strict set of regulations to control them. Similar to customary law, the (anti-)Jewish topics dealt with in municipal law mainly concerned legal and economic issues, yet often with additional agendas of the citizenry as a emerging political player from the thirteenth century onwards. Regulations concerning Jewish behaviour and contact between Jews and Christians were imported from church law, such as the provision of the municipal law of Jihlava that forbade Jews and Christians to meet on Good Friday.<sup>98</sup>

These qualms were outrivalled in importance by concerns that had a more immediate impact on municipal politics: Jewish testimony, moneylending (with a particular focus on interest rates), and pawn-broking, many of which emerged from, or resulted in direct conflict with the respective town lord. Many of these regulations were not necessarily anti-Jewish in their primary intent but strove at monitoring and controlling the Jews' legal status and Jewish economic activities; generally, cities sought to achieve as encompassing a control as possible over all the diverse groups, citizens and others, living within the municipality. While in church law, ideas stemming from late antiquity were transported into the Late Middle Ages and beyond, municipal law often removed regulations that were no longer deemed relevant: for example, by the late thirteenth century, the banning of Jews from public offices had disappeared from municipal legislation, since these jobs were already filled with Christian office-holders anyway.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Cf. Magin, "Wie es umb der iuden recht stet," 158–60.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Schreckenber, *Adversus Judaius*, 3:144–45.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. the examples provided by Haverkamp, "Jüdische Münzmeister," and Wenninger, "Juden als Münzmeister."

Apart from (attempts at) undermining and mitigating the Statute of the Market and regulating the objects legal for pawning (see above), the limitation of the interest rate taken by Jews was a core issue for many cities. Since a diminished interest rate usually went against the interest of the respective ruler, cities went about in different ways: some tried to simply limit the interest rates, or at least limit compound interest,<sup>100</sup> other cities took a more circumspect way, such as the citizens of Ulm, who sued their Jewish moneylenders on the basis of usury before the episcopal court.<sup>101</sup> Among the many different efforts (and an equal variety of outcomes), a particularly drastic example shall illustrate the possibilities of municipal and limits of, in this case, ducal policy: in the wake of persecutions triggered by an alleged host desecration in 1338, and quickly expanding throughout Lower Austria and south of Bohemia and Moravia, the city of Vienna seized the chance to make use of the persecution to their own advantage. In return for protection, they forced the Jewish community to agree to a reduction of interest rates from eight (as granted in the ducal privilege from 1244) to three pennies per pound a week on loans for Viennese citizens. The Austrian dukes had to consent to the reduction due to the precarious situation the Jews in their territories were in, and the reluctance of the three leaders of the Jewish community is evident in the epithets *the poor*, *the miserable*, and *the most ashamed* they added to their signatures respectively.<sup>102</sup>

The ecclesiastical reservations against Jews testifying in Christian courts and their right to sue Christians were translated into everyday practice in many municipal legal codes, combining the church's idea of a Jew's testimony being worth less (or even invalid) than a Christian's with the citizenry's aim at strengthening the municipal jurisdiction over the Jews (and, in many cases, thus weakening the ruler's). While the general right of Jews to take Christians to court was rarely disputed,<sup>103</sup> the Jews' position before court was weakened

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**100** E.g., Wiener Neustadt, Villach, cf. Wiedl, "Codifying Jews: Jews in Austrian Town Charters of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," in *Jews in Medieval Christendom: "Slay Them Not,"* ed. K. T. Utterback and M. L. Price (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 213; Frankfurt, cf. Schnur, *Juden in Frankfurt*, 456–58.

**101** Cf. C. Scholl, *Die Judengemeinde der Reichsstadt Ulm im späten Mittelalter: Innerjüdische Verhältnisse und christlich-jüdische Beziehungen in süddeutschen Zusammenhängen* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2012), 184–85.

**102** Cf. Wiedl, "Codifying Jews," 213–14.

**103** An exception is the legal code for Freising (Bavaria), which in some of its copies state that if a Christ killed a Jew, the judge, not the Jew's relatives, should act as plaintiff, cf. Magin, "*Wie es umb der iuden recht stet,*" 226–27.

by, for example, exchanging Jewish with Christian witnesses,<sup>104</sup> or demanding Jewish witnesses against a Jewish plaintiff.<sup>105</sup> Only a few municipal legal codes included a prohibition of Jewish testimony, in most cases, this regulation is contradicted within the manuscript by ordinances allowing it (stemming from other referential texts); in neither of these codes, the inconsistencies within the text were commented on (if the author was even aware of them).<sup>106</sup>

Already in its early medieval councils, the church had cautioned Christians against Jewish food, and in connection with the cities' economic regulations, Jews were often banned from professions concerned with food, among which the selling of "Jewish" meat turned out to be the most disputed one. While some of the regulations merely intended to target a presumed Jewish competition and thus put additional charges on Jewish meat or ordered them to sell their meat at home, many cities arranged for a clear identification of the stalls where Jewish meat was sold: Jews were assigned a specific booth that was either at the fringe of the market, thus removing Jews from a major public space, and/or used for the sale of "bad" meat (i.e., foul, trichinous meat or meat from sick or injured animals); if not, Jews were obliged to wear the Jewish hat (Augsburg) or had to alert potential Christian customers that they were about to buy "Jewish meat" (Bolzano).<sup>107</sup> It has been debated whether these assignments automatically meant an anti-Jewish association with "rotten" and "foul," labelling Jewish meat as inferior not because of its actual quality but its provenance, or whether the permission to sell the meat at all (which was an exclusive right of the butchers') was in fact a privilege.<sup>108</sup> In many towns, Jewish and Christian butchers cooperated: in Wroclaw, where in 1267 the synod had warned the Christians about the Jews' poisonous food, Jewish and Christian butchers had, after several conflicts, actually agreed on a collaboration that guaranteed both groups their safe income (which in return angered the bishop).<sup>109</sup>

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**104** Cf. Wiedl, "Codifying Jews," 211–12 (Wiener Neustadt and St. Veit); Magin, "Wie es umb der iuden recht stet," 270–73 (Magdeburg).

**105** Cf. Magin, "Wie es umb der iuden recht stet," 261–62 (Freising).

**106** Cf. *ibid.*, 268–270 (Meißen, Goslar).

**107** Cf. Wiedl, "Codifying Jews," 215–16.

**108** Cf. Magin, "Wie es umb der iuden recht stet," 348; G. Maier, *Wirtschaftliche Tätigkeitsfelder von Juden im Reichsgebiet (ca. 1273 bis 1350)* (Trier: Kliomedia, 2010).

**109** Cf. *ibid.*, 68–69.

## Conclusion

It is tantamount to a commonplace to stress that medieval anti-Jewish thoughts and actions were prevalent at all times and in all parts of society, to which medieval legislation, or rather its manifold variations, was but one contributor. For the populace, anti-Jewish narratives and visual images disseminated stereotypes and prejudices much more efficiently and engrained a deep-rooted mistrust into the common mind-set, however, the influence of medieval legislation should not be underestimated. Secular, municipal, and—to a certain extent—customary laws provided the framework inside of which medieval Jewish life could exist in Christian-dominated territories. Its anti-Jewish propensities varied greatly: while in the territories of the Holy Roman Empire, ideas of (imperial) protection and the financial gain from prospering Jewish communities for a long time prevented anti-Jewish thought from entering legislation (which, however, did not hinder many rulers to participate in the loot after persecutions), the Jews of England and France, under much tighter royal control, were subjected to a royal legislation that showed a stronger influence of canon and church law. Church law was, despite its limited impact on actual Jewish living conditions and daily life, one of the main mediums by which anti-Jewish ideas could persist from antiquity throughout the Middle Ages (and beyond), and worked as a catalyst for more commonly understandable narratives (e.g., the transubstantiation dogma and the ensuing host desecration accusations). Furthermore, medieval anti-Jewish laws, even if not implemented at the time, made sure that stereotypes not only prevailed but were deeply anchored in the legislation of both the church and the emerging modern states; they prepared the ground for policies of later centuries, such as the church's demands of segregation and separation of Jewish and Christian living spaces, which, while only rarely carried out in the Middle Ages, were translated into the reality of the ghettos from the sixteenth century onwards.

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## **Comprehending Antisemitism in Modern Times**



Michael Wladika

# Georg Ritter von Schönerers Radikalisierung zum Rassenantisemiten vom Linzer Programm 1882 bis zur Gründung des „Verbandes der Deutschnationalen“ 1885

Dieser Beitrag ist auf jene drei Jahre im politischen Leben Georg von Schönerers fokussiert, die stellvertretend für ein Anwachsen der Judenfeindschaft im Wien der 1880er Jahre stehen. Nach einer kurzen Vorstellung Schönerers und des Linzer Programms stellt er einen Versuch dar, seine Wandlung zum Rassenantisemiten vom Jahr 1882 bis 1885 anhand von fünf Punkten zu verdeutlichen.

Wer war Georg Heinrich Ritter von Schönerer? Im Juli 1842 in Wien geboren, wurde er 1873 in den Reichsrat gewählt, nachdem er Gut und Schloss Rosenau im Waldviertel von seinem prominenten Vater, dem Eisenbahningenieur Matthias Schönerer, übernommen und sich dort für die Bauern eingesetzt hatte. Im Parlament schloss er sich zunächst den Deutschliberalen an. Es war vor allem Schönerers Eintreten für einen Sparkurs und eine Steuerreform, womit er gegen die Säulen des Reiches, nämlich gegen die Befreiung der Kirchen von der Gebäudesteuer und gegen die Steuerfreiheit des Kaiserhauses Stellung bezog, mit denen er kleinere Skandale provozierte. In einer Rede im Dezember 1878 kritisierte Schönerer die Regierung auf das Schärfste und schloss mit dem Ruf: „Wenn wir nur schon zum Deutschen Reich gehören würden!“ 1879 wiedergewählt, trat er am 10. Dezember 1880 für das allgemeine, gleiche und direkte Wahlrecht ein.<sup>1</sup>

Als von ihm ausgearbeitete Parteiprogramme allesamt wegen ihrer Radikalität von den Liberalen abgelehnt wurden, reifte ihn ihm der Entschluss, selber eine deutschnationale Partei zu gründen. Daher hielt Georg von Schönerer am 28. Februar 1882 im Reichsrat seine berühmt-berüchtigte Abschiedsrede von der liberalen Verfassungspartei, der er vorwarf, staatliche vor nationale Interessen zu stellen. Von ihr wollte er sich in einer Erklärung, in der er seine eigene Kompromisslosigkeit rechtfertigte, „reinigen“: „Jene Deutschen, welche sich bisher den Feinden des Deutschtums als Helfershelfer zugesellten, haben den Namen als

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1 Zur Gesamtproblematik cf. M. Wladika, *Hitlers Vätergeneration: Die Ursprünge des Nationalsozialismus in der k. u. k. Monarchie* (Wien et al.: Böhlau, 2005) 67–77.



Deutsche verwirkt und sind für alle Zeit als Abtrünnige zu brandmarken,“ lautete die Resolution, die er dazu verlas.<sup>2</sup>

Georg Schönerer begann nun außerhalb des Parlaments in den Burschenschaften und in den studentischen Lesevereinen umtriebiger zu werden und warb für seine Ideen. Das erste greifbare Ergebnis war die Gründung der Halbmonatsschrift „Deutsche Worte,“ vom symbolbehafteten Schönerer nach dem Lied „Deutsche Worte hör’ ich wieder ...“ benannt, welche erstmals am 1. Mai 1881 erschien.<sup>3</sup> Als erster Chefredakteur fungierte der Burschenschafter Engelbert Pernerstorfer. In einer „Einladung zum Abonnement,“ erklärte er Sinn und Zweck der neuen Zeitung:

Wer deutsch ist und treu und ehrlich ist, an den treten wir heran ... Was wir sehnlichst wünschen, das ist die Bildung einer (echten) volkstümlichen deutschen Partei.<sup>4</sup>

Am 2. Juni 1882 gründete Georg von Schönerer den mehr nationalbetonen *Deutschnationalen Verein*, der sofort rund 70 Mitglieder umfasste und nach seinen Vorstellungen eine elitäre Kaderorganisation sein sollte. Der Verfasser der ersten kurzen Schönerer-Biographie, der Journalist Franz Masaidek, stellte in der Gründungsversammlung den Antrag, diesen „ersten politischen deutschnationalen Verein judenrein zu halten.“<sup>5</sup> Der spätere Arbeiterführer Viktor Adler, der beitreten wollte, teilte man aus diesem Grund mit, dass er unerwünscht sei.<sup>6</sup> Er ist im Februar 1884 den marxistisch orientierten Sozialdemokraten beigetreten und ging damit den Weg vieler – auch assimilierter – Juden, die vom deutschnationalen Lager ausgeschlossen wurden und mit einem klerikalen Antisemitismus im christlichsozialen Lager noch weniger umgehen konnten. Für ihre Reformtätigkeit fanden sie nur im sozialistischen Lager eine neue Heimat. Für Schönerer aber, wie später für Adolf Hitler war diese „Elastizität“ Beweis genug, dass jüdische Intellektuelle für die Verbreitung des Marxismus und des Internationalismus verantwortlich wären, was beides den deutschen Interessen zum Nachteil gereiche.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Stenographische Protokolle der Sitzungen des Abgeordnetenhauses des österreichischen Reichsrates, IX. Session, 200. Sitzung vom 28. Februar 1882, 7059f.

<sup>3</sup> Wladika, *Hitlers Vätergeneration*, 150.

<sup>4</sup> *Deutsche Worte* 4, 16. Juli 1881.

<sup>5</sup> F. F. Masaidek, *Georg von Schönerer und die deutschnationale Bewegung* (Wien: Schalk, 1898), 13.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. J. Moser, „Von der Emanzipation zur antisemitischen Bewegung. Die Stellung Georg Ritter von Schönerers und Heinrich Friedjung in der Entwicklungsgeschichte des Antisemitismus in Österreich (1848–1896),“ PhD diss., Universität Wien, 1962, 85.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Wladika, *Hitlers Vätergeneration*, 157f.

Am 1. September 1882 wurde schließlich die Endfassung des Parteistatutes, das „Linzer Programms der Deutschnationalen,“ in den „Deutschen Worten“ veröffentlicht.<sup>8</sup> Es war dies eine Unternehmung von mehrheitlich aus kleinbürgerlichem Milieu stammender Burschschafter, an der an prominenter Stelle mit Viktor Adler (Arminia), Heinrich Friedjung (Concordia-Prag) und Serafin Bondy auch drei Juden mitgewirkt haben, bis sie ausschieden.<sup>9</sup> Die Widersprüche, die an manchen Stellen so eklatant sind, dass das Programm unleserlich wird, lässt es als Konglomerat mehrerer Ideen erscheinen.

Die beiden wichtigsten Forderungen des „Linzer Programms“ führten daher auch zu den verschiedensten Auslegungen. Das Verlangen nach einer Personalunion mit Ungarn schon alleine wegen der finanziellen Kosten eines „miserablen Ausgleichs“ war nicht neu. Auch wenn man Dalmatien, Bosnien-Herzegowina, Galizien und die Bukowina keiner Sonderstellung zuführen, sondern genauso aus Kostengründen mit Ungarn vereinigen wollte, um damit einen festgefügten Block zu schaffen, war auch dies nur eine Weiterentwicklung bereits bestehender Programme. In wenig geschöner Form ließ es damit aber das Verlangen nach einer Diktatur über die nicht deutschen Völker erkennen, oder zumindest eine Politik rücksichtsloser Germanisierung. Durch den Wunsch nach Abtretungen wäre Österreich jedoch dermaßen geschwächt worden, dass es als Verbündeter des hochgelobten Deutschen Reiches diesem eben keinen militärischen Beistand hätte leisten können. Wenn das Programm auch an keiner Stelle den Antisemitismus zu einem Forderungspunkt erklärte, so könnte man es dahingehend auslegen, dass die Judenfeindschaft in dem Verlangen nach einer Abtretung der völlig „undeutschen“ Provinzen Galiziens und der Bukowina an Ungarn doch indirekt zum Ausdruck kam, denn diese Separationen von der österreichischen Reichshälfte hätten einen Zustrom der dort lebenden eine Million Juden jäh unterbrochen.

Sieht man nun das Linzer Programm unter der Prämisse der Unterdrückung anderer Volksgruppen als undemokratisch an, so muss auch die Forderung nach dem direkten Wahlrecht unter Punkt 3 in diesem Licht gesehen werden. Dies umso mehr, als es gleich darunter „Staatsbeamte“ und „alle, die mit dem Staat Geschäfte machen,“ von genau diesem ausschloss. Dass darüber hinaus nur „deutsche Männer“ gewählt werden sollten, daher ein rein deutsches passives Wahlrecht gefordert wurde, erklärt von selbst, dass ein direktes Wahlrecht nur

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<sup>8</sup> Abgedruckt in: K. Berchtold, ed. *Österreichische Parteiprogramme 1868–1966* (Wien: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1968), 195.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Die Wartburg* 2 (Februar 1901): 5; F. Benda, *Der deutsche Turnerbund 1889: Seine Entwicklung und Weltanschauung* (Wien: Verband wissenschaftlicher Gesellschaften Österreichs, 1991), 124.

solange ein Programmpunkt war, solange es auch ein Primat der Deutschen zu sichern vermochte.

Nicht neu hingegen waren die Forderungen, „den Staatsgrundgesetzen die volle Geltung zu verschaffen,“ das bestehende Steuerwesen zu ändern, nämlich eine progressive Einkommenssteuer anstelle der direkten Steuer einzuführen, was auch Auswirkungen auf das Wahlrecht gehabt hätte, Gewerkschaften zuzulassen, die Gewerbeordnung zu reformieren und vor allem die Eisenbahnen zu verstaatlichen, eine Forderung, die gleich zweimal im Programm aufscheint.

Isoliert, gleichsam als Programm im Programm, stehen die möglicherweise auf Viktor Adler zurückgehenden Teile – in der Endredaktion Schönerers – mit dem Verlangen nach einer Reform der Fabrikgesetzgebung, besonders nach der Senkung der Normalarbeitszeit, der Beschränkung der Kinder- und Frauenarbeitszeit und nach der Haftpflicht für Arbeitgeber nach Unfällen. Sie fanden später allesamt Eingang in sozialdemokratische Programme. Eine Urheberschaft Adlers wird deshalb angenommen, weil Schönerer diese Forderungen vorher und nachher nicht erhoben hat.

Das Programm stand durchaus auf demokratischem Boden. Auf der anderen Seite war es von einer deutlichen Ablehnung von Dynastie und Regierung getragen. Niemand konnte jedoch an einen Totalumbau des Staates glauben, auch Schönerer nicht, weswegen das Programm wieder viel von seinem Grundsatzcharakter erhält. Als einziger Ausweg wäre an eine „sanfte Revolution“ zu denken gewesen, oder mittels verschärfter politischer Propaganda den deutschen Nationalismus so zu stärken, dass man zumindest auf eine Veränderung des Staatsgebildes hinarbeiten konnte, eine Taktik, die Schönerer in den nächsten Jahren auch tatsächlich verfolgte, ehe er für eine kleine irredentistische Kaderpartei eintrat.

Aber auch beim Antisemitismus bestand damals noch so etwas wie ein Grundkonsens, wenn er auch von zwei verschiedenen Wurzeln gespeist wurde. In diesem Zusammenhang erscheint die Frage falsch formuliert, warum Schönerer Adler und Friedjung „an seinem Programm mitarbeiten ließ,“ die zwar jüdischer Abstammung, aber nicht Angehörige der jüdischen Religion waren. Beide strebten einen wirtschaftlichen Antisemitismus an. Die meisten politisch radikalen Juden wollten mit Schönerer zusammenarbeiten und nicht umgekehrt, weil seine preußenfreundliche und antisemitische Weltanschauung vom jungen radikalen Flügel des deutschen Lagers als sensationeller Aufruf zur Gründung einer demokratischen „Deutschen Volkspartei“ (miss)verstanden wurde, während Schönerers Antisemitismus – und hier liegt der bedeutende Unterschied – zwar von den deutschen Studenten entfacht, vorwiegend aber in dieser Phase durch den starken jüdischen Einfluss in der Wiener Presse genährt wurde. Diese Zusammenarbeit mit drei Programmgestaltern jüdischer Abstammung gibt ande-

rerseits Aufschluss auch darüber, dass sich Schönerers Wandlung zum Rassenantisemiten erst in den nächsten Jahren vollzog und erst 1885 abgeschlossen war.<sup>10</sup>

Von 1882 bis 1885 vollzog Georg von Schönerer eine Wandlung hin zum Rassenantisemiten, daher zu einem radikalen Antisemitismus, der Juden auch nach der Taufe und ihrer Assimilation das Recht absprach, Christen oder „Deutsche“ zu sein. Ausschlaggebend für diese Radikalisierung sind mehrere, in diese Zeitspanne fallende Entwicklungen, die sich in fünf Punkten festmachen lassen:

(1) Für wesentlich wird die Herausgabe des Buches von Eugen Dühring, „Die Judenfrage als Racen-, Sitten- und Culturfrage mit einer weltgeschichtlichen Antwort“ erachtet, die in der 2. Auflage 1881 auch in Österreich erhältlich war. Der 1833 in Berlin geborene Dühring war anfänglich Jurist und als Rechtsanwalt tätig, bis er 1859 erblindete und seinen Beruf aufgeben musste. Trotz seiner Behinderung setzte er seine Studien in Nationalökonomie, Mechanik, Logik, Ethik und Literatur fort. 1863 habilitierte sich Dühring in Philosophie, 1864 in Nationalökonomie. Im selben Jahr erhielt er eine Dozentenstelle an der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin. Als er in Konflikte mit Professorenkollegen geriet, verlor er 1877 seine Lehrbefugnis und wirkte von da an bis zu seinem Tod 1921 als Privatgelehrter. Dühring war überzeugter Rassenantisemit. Er beschrieb die „Judenfrage“ mit wissenschaftlichem Anspruch als Ausdruck eines unaufhebbaren Rassengegensatzes: Das Judentum sei von Natur aus unvermeidbar der Feind aller Kulturvölker, die sich gegen diesen wehren müssen, um nicht selbst unterzugehen.<sup>11</sup>

Georg von Schönerer hat dieses Buch gekannt. Das ist deswegen belegt, weil er Stellen daraus im Reichsrat während der Auseinandersetzung mit dem Floridsdorfer Rabbi Bloch zitierte.<sup>12</sup>

(2) Entscheidend für die Entwicklung der alldeutschen Bewegung sollte der Bruch mit dem Georg von Schönerer ideologisch am nächsten stehenden Engelbert Pernerstorfer werden, der ein Protagonist eines nationalen Sozialismus

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Wladika, *Hitlers Vätergeneration*, 154–7. Siehe auch dazu R. Kann, *Das Nationalitätenproblem der Habsburgermonarchie: Geschichte und Ideengehalt der nationalen Bestrebungen vom Vormärz bis zur Auflösung des Reiches im Jahre 1918* (Graz: Böhlau, 1964), 1: 100ff; F. L. Carsten, *Faschismus in Österreich: Von Schönerer zu Hitler* (München: Fink, 1978), 13ff.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. A. Kruse, „Dühring, Eugen,“ in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, ed. Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1959), 4: 157–8, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118527797.html#ndbcontent>; A. Bain, *Die Judenfrage: Biographie eines Weltproblems* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1980), 1: 224.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Stenographische Protokolle der Sitzungen des Abgeordnetenhauses des österreichischen Reichsrates, IX. Session, 331. Sitzung vom 12. Februar 1884, 11465.

war. Der Bruch vollzog sich im Laufe des Jahres 1883, da über die Frage des Antisemitismus ein „Fraktionsstreit“ entstanden war, der sich auch auf die Studentenschaft ausweitete. Der Anlass dazu war eine antisemitische Reichsratsrede Schönenerers am 16. April 1883, die Pernerstorfer als Chefredakteur in den „Deutschen Worten“ nicht abdrucken wollte. Schönenerers Rede, mit der er gegen einen Abänderungsantrag zur Schulgesetzesnovelle stimmte, ist ein gutes Beispiel für den Aufbau des Rassenantisemitismus auf seiner konfessionellen Variante als Zugpferd:

Das Gefühl des christlichen Volkes (sträubt) sich mit Recht dagegen, dass sich an christlichen Schulen jüdische Lehrer oder gar Schulleiter befinden. Die Volksschule ist für das praktische Christentum bestimmt, es sollte überall gleich unterrichtet werden. Ich bin eben bestrebt, allen fremden Elementen entgegenzuarbeiten, vor allem jenen vaterlandslosen Spekulanten, welche sich die Korruption der germanischen Rasse schon in der Volksschule zum Ziel gesetzt haben.<sup>13</sup>

In einem offenen Brief an Schönenerer vom 16. Juni 1883 stellte Pernerstorfer bezüglich seiner Rede, die er nicht veröffentlichen wollte, fest:

Ich fühle mich verpflichtet, wie schon öfter zu erklären, dass die Form des Antisemitismus, welche heute bei uns Parteidogma zu werden beginnt, mir gänzlich unannehmbar erscheint. Der Kampf richtet sich viel mehr gegen die Juden als gegen das Judentum, was zu einer Verrohung des öffentlichen Lebens führte. Ich stehe nicht auf (dem) brutalem Standpunkt des ‚Juden hinaus‘, ja (ich) stehe sogar zu der ketzerischen Meinung, dass es auch anständige Juden gibt.<sup>14</sup>

Neben dem sich abzeichnenden Konflikt zwischen dem Rassenantisemitismus und dem traditionellen Nationalismus, der den Antisemitismus nur als taktisches Mittel benutzte, den Schönenerer nun verließ, ist der Artikel vor allem durch die Formulierung des so typisch österreichischen „schlafenden“ Antisemitismus von Bedeutung. Auch Karl Lueger wird sich später dankbar des Widerspruchs bedienen, dass die „Juden zwar insgesamt schlecht“ wären, man aber auch einzelne, „anständige“ kenne. Nach einigen vergeblichen Versuchen einzulenken, verließ Pernerstorfer, der interessanterweise schon seit Dezember 1869 Mitglied des sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterbildungsvereins Gumpendorf war, im Juni den

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**13** Stenographische Protokolle der Sitzungen des Abgeordnetenhauses des österreichischen Reichsrates, IX. Session, 269. Sitzung vom 16. April 1883, 10185 f. Cf. Wladika, Hitlers Vätergeneration, 164.

**14** Der Brief wurde in den *Deutschen Worten*, Nr. 12 vom 16. Juni 1883 abgedruckt.

„Deutschnationalen Verein.“<sup>15</sup> Ab 1. Juli 1883 stellte Schönerer in der von ihm neu gegründeten Zeitung „Unverfälschte Deutsche Worte“ eine „unverfälschte,“ radikalere Version entgegen, die seine Wandlung zum Rassenantisemitismus noch mehr verdeutlichte, wenn er in der ersten Ausgabe schrieb: „Auf dem brutalen Rassenstandpunkt stehend, müssen wir erklären, dass wir weit eher eine Vermischung mit den Slawen und Romanen für möglich halten, als eine innige Verbindung mit den Juden. Sind doch die ersteren als Arier mit uns stammesverwandt, während die letzteren aus der Abstammung uns völlig ferne stehen.“<sup>16</sup>

(3) Der „Nordbahn-Skandal,“ der sich über die Jahre 1884 und 1885 erstreckte und ein gehöriges Aufsehen mit einer zeitweiligen innenpolitischen totalen Lähmung hervorrief, sollte ein weiterer „entscheidender Moment“ in Schönerers politischem Leben werden. Im Jahre 1884 musste die Regierung mit der Frage über die Verlängerung der Konzession der Nordbahn, der sogenannten „Kaiser Ferdinand Eisenbahngesellschaft,“ deren Aktienbesitz sich vornehmlich in den Händen der jüdischen Familie Rothschild und Mitgliedern des Kaiserhauses befand, aus verfassungstechnischen Gründen den Reichsrat befassen. Schönerer und der Deutschnationale Verein sammelten in kürzester Zeit 30.000 Unterschriften, die sie in Form einer Petition, die Nordbahn gänzlich zu verstaatlichen, im Abgeordnetenhaus einbrachten.<sup>17</sup> In den drei berühmt gewordenen „Nordbahnreden“ vom 2. Mai 1884, 12. Jänner 1885 und vom 27. März 1885 peitschte Schönerer die Bevölkerung, aber auch den längst in alle Parteienschattierungen gespaltenen Reichsrat dermaßen auf, dass sich die Regierung gezwungen sah, die bereits erfolgte Konzessionsverlängerung zu modifizieren. Schönerer bewies dabei mit geschickter, rücksichtsloser Agitation, wie eine kleine Minorität eine Mehrheit dominieren konnte, die unter anderen Umständen deren Ideen und Verhaltensweisen verabscheut hätte. Georg von Schönerer sah sich selbst als der „einzige Volksvertreter, hinter dem neun Zehntel der gesamten Bevölkerung steht.“ Die Auseinandersetzung um die Verstaatlichung der Nordbahn gab ihm Gelegenheit, alle seien politischen Ansichten zu vereinen: Seinen Antisemitismus und seine Habsburgerfeindlichkeit richtete er gezielt und personifiziert gegen die Familie Rothschild, die reichste jüdische Familie der Donaumonarchie und gegen die Aktionäre des Kaiserhauses. Da in Preußen schon viel früher der größte Teil

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15 K. R. Stadler, „Engelbert Pernerstorfer: Zur ‚deutschnationalen‘ Tradition in der österreichischen Sozialdemokratie,“ in *Beiträge zur Zeitgeschichte. Festschrift für Ludwig Jedlicka zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. R. Neck und A. Wandruszka (St. Pölten: Niederösterreichisches Pressehaus, 1976), 47.

16 *Unverfälschte Deutsche Worte* 1 (1. Juli 1883): 1.

17 Cf. R. Elmayer von Vestenbrugg, *Georg Ritter von Schönerer: Der Vater des politischen Antisemitismus* (München: Eher, 1936), 43.

der Eisenbahnen verstaatlicht wurde, konnte er Otto von Bismarck ins Spiel bringen und diesen als den „größten Sozialreformer des Jahrhunderts“ anpreisen. Mit der Petition an den Reichsrat, die Nordbahn zu verstaatlichen, hatte er plötzlich unglaubliche 30.000 Stimmen „aus dem Volk“ und konnte so in einer einmaligen Demonstration direkter Demokratie die Bevölkerung gegen den Kapitalismus aufhetzen, wobei er letztlich die Grenzen einer durch Plebiszite ausgehöhlten Demokratie aufzeigte. Die Wiener liberale Presse, die seine Vorgangsweise kritisierte, erklärte er für „verjudet“ und von der Regierung bestochen. Provokateure auf den Zuschauerreihen unterbrachen die Sitzungen immer wieder mit den Rufen „Nieder das Parlament! Nieder mit den Nordbahnjuden! Heil Schönerer!“<sup>18</sup>

Gleich die am 2. Mai 1884 gehaltene „Erste Nordbahnrede“ zog einen spektakulären Ehrenbeleidigungsprozess nach sich, den Schönerer gegen den mächtigsten liberalen Journalisten jüdischer Abstammung der damaligen Monarchie anstrebte, nämlich gegen Moritz Szeps, den Gründer und Chefredakteur des „Neuen Wiener Tagblattes“, ein aus Galizien eingewanderter, in kürzester Zeit steinreich gewordener Förderer der Wiener Moderne und ein enger Freund Kronprinz Rudolfs. Szeps, der diesen Prozess am 17. November 1884 sensationeller Weise gegen Georg von Schönerer verlor und zu vier Wochen Haft verurteilt wurde,<sup>19</sup> sagte in der Verhandlung: „Herr von Schönerer (hat) in unserer Stadt, in den deutschen Ländern Österreichs eine Stellung gewonnen, wie sie jetzt kein anderer Mann einnimmt und dieser Stellung kann nichts etwas anhaben – nichts!“<sup>20</sup> Sogar das „Vaterland“ titelte damals: „Die Terroristen der jüdischen Presse sind gerichtet, mit ihrer Schreckensherrschaft ist es zu Ende!“ Bei Schönerer waren nun alle Dämme gebrochen. Hatte ihn am Prozess die einmalige Verbindung von Liberalismus, Judentum und Herrscherhaus besonders gereizt, so forderte er in seiner Rede vom 13. Februar 1885 ziemlich offen zur Vernichtung der jüdischen Presse und damit auch ihrer Akteure auf, indem er einen „letzten Appell“ an die Regierung richtete:

Hinweg mit der von korrupten und jüdischen Einflüssen beherrschten Presse! Hinweg mit dieser semitische Pestbeule! Hinweg mit diesen Fremdlingen in unserem Heim! Zertretet

**18** E. Mayer-Löwenschwert, *Schönerer, der Vorkämpfer: Eine politische Biographie* (Wien: Braumüller, 1938), 90.

**19** Zum Prozessverlauf siehe ÖStA, AVA, Nachlass Eduard Pichl, Kt. 37 (Robert Pattai), Mappe „Pattai an Schönerer. Briefwechsel.“

**20** Zitiert in: B. Hamann, *Rudolf: Kronprinz und Rebell* (Wien: Amalthea, 1987), 405.

diese volksfeindliche Nattern und macht ein Ende dieser journalistischen Giftmischerei, damit das so hart bedrängte Volk nicht zur Selbsthilfe gezwungen werde.<sup>21</sup>

Zwei Dinge sollten zu den „Nordbahnreden“ noch angemerkt werden: Schönerer rühmte sich später immer wieder, dass für ihn Verständigung und Kompromiss verschleierte Formen der Kapitulation wären. Nur dreißig Jahre später galt es als höchste Tugend der Nationalsozialisten „kompromisslos“ zu sein. Auf der anderen Seite unterstützte ihn Karl Lueger während des Nordbahnskandals lautstark; der Mann, der später sehr schnell die Kleingewerbetreibenden auf seine Seite ziehen konnte und eine ganz andere Auffassung von Antisemitismus vertrat, welcher im Gegensatz zu Schönerer konfessionell und wirtschaftlich ausgerichtet war.<sup>22</sup>

(4) Die Reichsratswahlen des Jahres 1885 verdienen eine besondere Erwähnung, weil viele Ereignisse dieses Jahres auf einen brutal geführten Wahlkampf zurückzuführen sind. Nach der Reform der Regierung Taaffe waren erstmals die sogenannten „Fünf-Guldenmänner“ wahlberechtigt. Das waren Männer, die zumindest fünf Gulden jährliche Steuerleistung vorweisen konnten. Es schlug daher auch für die „Schönerianer“ die Stunde, die das erste Mal auf einer eigenen Liste kandidierten, eine nach unten hin breitere Gruppierung anzusprechen.<sup>23</sup>

Im Vorfeld der Wahl organisierten einige Anhänger Schönerers den „Politischen Bezirksverein Mariahilf-Neubau,“ die erste Wiener antisemitische Vorstadtvereinigung für die „Testwahl,“ die Wiener Gemeinderatswahlen im Frühjahr 1885. Bald folgte auch der Wiener Rechtsanwalt Robert Pattai dem Ruf dieses Vereines. Gegen die von Karl Lueger angeführten Demokraten führte Pattai das scheinbar einzige Schönerianische Unterscheidungsmerkmal ins Treffen:

Wir nennen den Feind, wie es Männern geziemt, laut, damit es Alle hören können: Es ist der Jude. Unser Kampf gilt keiner Konfession! Unser Kampf ist der Rassenkampf! Der Rassenjude ist der Feind, der unser nationales Bewusstsein verunglimpft, der Jude ist es, der durch seine nimmersatte Geldgier das ehrliche Volk aussaugt.<sup>24</sup>

Dieses Bekenntnis war eine allzu deutliche Stellungnahme zugunsten Schönerers.

Karl Lueger, der sich mit Georg von Schönerer für die Reichsratswahlen 1885 verbünden wollte, wurde von diesem mit den Worten „Demgegenüber muss ich

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<sup>21</sup> Zitate in: H. Schnee, *Georg Ritter von Schönerer: Ein Kämpfer für Alldeutschland* (Reichenberg: Kraus, 1940), 206.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Wladika, *Hitlers Vätergeneration*, 174.

<sup>24</sup> Aufruf vom 12. März 1884, ÖStA, AVA, Nachlass Eduard Pichl, Kt. 37 (Robert Pattai).



erklären, dass ich niemals faule Kompromisse mit Parteien eingehe, die die Schleppenträger der Regierung sind, wie z. B. mit einem Dr. Lueger,“ brüsk abgelehnt.<sup>25</sup>

Am 1. April 1885 veranstaltete Schönerer gemeinsam mit den Burschenschaften einen Bismarck-Kommers anlässlich des 70. Geburtstages des deutschen Reichskanzlers. In der Festrede hob er hervor, „nach Deutschland zu blicken,“ dem er sich „ewig und eins verbunden fühle.“ Auf Österreich bezogen sprach er von einem „Existenzkampf des Deutschtums,“ den er mit „Gottes Hilfe“ führe.<sup>26</sup> Dieser Bezug auf Bismarck fand auch in seinem Wahlaufuf vom 1. Mai 1885 Eingang, in dem Schönerer unter anderem eine „wirtschaftliche Reformpolitik im Sinne des Fürsten Bismarck“ forderte.<sup>27</sup> Die Wahl selbst wurde für den „Deutschnationalen Verein“ alles andere als ein glänzender Sieg. Außer dem unbestrittenen Parteiführer schafften nur zwei Schönerianer den Sprung in den Reichsrat, die anderen fünf Kandidaten fielen durch. Wichtiger aber noch erscheint die Tatsache, dass mit Robert Pattai im Jahre 1885 erstmals ein alldeutscher, wenn auch „unabhängiger,“ Reichsratsabgeordneter gewählt wurde, der einen antisemitischen Wahlsieg gegen einen Liberalen in Wien errang. Damit war endgültig der Beweis erbracht, dass ein Team in nur einem Bezirk den Rassenantisemitismus effektiv einsetzen konnte.<sup>28</sup> Wieso Pattai gerade in Mariahilf erfolgreich war, erklärt sich am ehesten aus dem Umstand, dass viele Gewerbetreibende durch die neu errichteten und häufig in jüdischem Besitz befindlichen Kaufhäuser hofften, ihre Probleme durch eine antisemitische Gesetzgebung lösen zu können.

Georg von Schönerer, der sich keiner der sich im neugebildeten Reichsrat formierenden Klubs angeschlossen hatte, gründete im Oktober 1885 statt des Deutschnationalen Vereines des Jahres 1882 mit dem „Verband der Deutschnationalen“ unter seiner Obmannschaft eine Wahlpartei im heutigen Sinn. Der „Deutschnationale Klub“ mit seinen zwei Mitstreitern wurde hingegen seine eigene Fraktion im Reichsrat.<sup>29</sup> Dort warf Schönerer den gleichgesinnten, aber gemäßigeren Deutschnationalen unter der Führung Otto Steinwenders vor, „Kom-

25 Zitiert in: E. Mayer-Löwenschwerdt, *Schönerer*, 92.

26 H. Schnee, *Georg Ritter von Schönerer*, 137.

27 Georg von Schönerer, Wahlaufuf vom 1. Mai 1885, abgedruckt in: Berchtold, *Österreichische Parteiprogramme*, 203.

28 Cf. Stenographische Protokolle der Sitzungen des Abgeordnetenhauses des österreichischen Reichsrates, Eröffnungssitzung der X. Session vom 22. September 1885, 2; P. Molisch, „Die Stellung Wiens in der deutschösterreichischen Politik von 1848 bis 1918,“ *In Jahrbuch des Vereines für Geschichte der Stadt Wien* 3–4 (1942): 190.

29 Cf. Benda, *Der deutsche Turnerbund 1889*, 128.

promissler“ zu sein und einer Partei der „leeren Phrase“ anzugehören. Daher könnten sie wegen ihres „Verrates am deutschen Volk“ in der Judenfrage keine deutschen Patrioten mehr sein. Gerade Steinwender vertrat eben eine Richtung, die nicht von erzwungener Einigkeit und Kompromisslosigkeit geprägt war, die ihn auch zu einem Vorläufer jener nationalen Politiker werden ließ, die in der Ersten Republik mit der Bereitschaft zur Versöhnung und mit dem Willen zur sachlichen Arbeit Regierungsverantwortung trugen.<sup>30</sup>

Um sich von diesen Deutschnationalen abzuheben, war Schönerers Politik jetzt noch mehr auf Zerstörung ausgerichtet. Der Antisemitismus hatte den Bismarck-Kult vergangener Jahre und die Forderung nach dem allgemeinen Wahlrecht, sowie die Anschlussbestrebungen an das Deutsche Reich, endgültig in die zweite Reihe gestellt. Die Zurückdrängung des jüdischen Einflusses war zum Hauptprogramm geworden und fortan ein Maßstab für soziale Missstände. Alles, die Universitäten, die Sozialdemokratie, die Christlichsozialen, der Liberalismus, die gemäßigten Deutschnationalen, die Literatur und die Musik galten nun für ihn als „verjudet.“<sup>31</sup> Dabei nahm gerade der Nationalismus in diesen Jahren in den deutschen Parteien der Monarchie mit Otto Steinwender für die Deutschnationalen, Viktor Adler für die Sozialdemokraten und Karl Lueger für die Christlichsozialen einen unerhörten Aufschwung. Der Vergleich zeigt andererseits, wie sehr Schönerer in ein radikales Eck abgedriftet war.

(5) Georg von Schönerers Wandlung zum Rassenantisemiten wurde auch durch das sich abzeichnende Formieren der Massenparteien der Sozialdemokraten und Christlichsozialen beschleunigt, die eine scheinbar weitere Bedrohung der Deutschnationalen darstellten. Es begann die Zeit der modernen Wahlparteien, die die Honoratioren ablösten.<sup>32</sup>

Schließlich fügte Schönerer 1885 als Endpunkt der hier aufgezeigten Entwicklung eigenmächtig einen Absatz an das Linzer Programm von 1882 an, welcher die Forderung nach „Beseitigung des jüdischen Einflusses auf allen Gebieten des öffentlichen Lebens“ enthielt,<sup>33</sup> eine Bestimmung, die Juden auch von jeglicher Mitgliedschaft in deutschnationalen Parteien und Vereinen ausschloss, da ihnen die charakterliche Befähigung zur Teilhabe an der deutschen Nation abgesprochen wurde.

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. E. Mayer-Löwenschwert, *Schönerer*, 93.

<sup>31</sup> Masaidek, *Georg von Schönerer und die deutschnationale Bewegung*, 14.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. M. Wladika, „Ende der liberalen Ära und Anfänge der Massenparteien. Deutschnationale und Christlichsoziale,“ in *Experiment Metropole: 1873: Wien und die Weltausstellung*, ed. W. Kos und R. Gleis (Wien: Czernin, 2014), 272–81.

<sup>33</sup> Berchtold, *Österreichische Parteiprogramme*, 203.

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Richard S. Levy

## The Defense against Antisemitism: Minor Victories, Major Defeats, 1890 – 1939

Since I wrote this paper in the summer of 2018, I have found myself wondering if its title constitutes a just judgment on nearly 130 years of struggle by Jews and non-Jews to eliminate organized antisemitism. Surely, if I had subtitled it “Major Victories, Minor Defeats,” we would have to ask ourselves about the purpose of this great conference. Antisemitism, ever-changing, ever-threatening, is still very much with us. What I was wondering about instead was whether we can speak of even minor victories, and, more generally, whether the history of the fight against organized antisemitism during many decades has anything useful to teach us today. I believe that this history and both the victories and defeats are still instructive.

First some clarifications, beginning with the coining of the term: I have not been able to find the use of the word *antisemitism* before 1860, when it was employed in a cultural rather than a political sense. By late 1879, the German journalist and political activist Wilhelm Marr seized upon the word *antisemite* as a way of distinguishing his political agenda from traditional Christian Judeophobia and from the commonplace prejudices of his day, thus hoping to give his views the aura of a scientifically derived truth, the product of his personal experience and historical research.

Important to note about the early history of *antisemitism* is how rapidly what was essentially a neologism achieved the broadest currency. There must have existed a perceived need for a new word to describe the resurgence of conflicts between Jews and the peoples among whom they lived, fondly thought to be nearly overcome in this age of progress but which in fact were becoming ever more openly expressed. The need for a new word affected not just self-identified antisemites but Jews, non-Jewish critics, and neutral bystanders throughout Europe and wherever Europeans settled in the world. The word appeared in titles of books and pamphlets and on the mastheads of newspapers in English, French, Italian, Hungarian, Dutch, and Russian—all by 1894 and in places where no organized antisemitism existed, as well as where it was developing into full-fledged political movements. Even to outsiders, something new seemed to be agitating the vexed relations between Jews and others.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the early history of the term, see R. S. Levy, “Antisemitism, Etymology of,” in *Antisemitism: A Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution*, ed. R. S. Levy (Santa Barbara: ABC-

Certainly, some periods in Jewish history were characterized by oppression and violence before the 1880s. What was markedly different about this new phenomenon, however, was the swift institutionalization of antisemitism in political parties, grassroots organizations, lobbying agencies, newspapers, learned journals, and a variety of voluntary associations. In the past, persecution had been episodic; outbursts of terrible violence alternated with long periods of quiet relations between Jews and their neighbors. Now, since the emergence of organized antisemitism in the 1880s, the action programs aimed at Jews, buttressed by modern mass media and new technologies, were being played out in the political life of nations; the announced intention of the movement was to continue the struggle for as long as it took to solve the “Jewish Question.”<sup>2</sup>

When it was no longer just a matter of ancient prejudice—what people said or thought about Jews—and had become a question of what they intended to *do* about them, an organized response among Jews and non-Jews took shape. It is not surprising that the first systematic, nationally focused, defense efforts emerged in Germany, where the organized antisemitic movement experienced its first successes. The following essay concentrates on this specific history because it was and remained the most important, setting precedents in the response to antisemitic assaults in many places. It remains significant because anti-antisemitism’s successes and failures in Germany were replicated elsewhere in subsequent years.

It bears mentioning here that, while I do not give great weight to all-too-common Jew-hatred in my understanding of antisemitism, the importance of casual prejudice among large parts of the population cannot be discounted. Without this reservoir of animosity and suspicion, there would be no constituency for those who wanted to act against Jews. This essay does not address anti-Jewish feeling because no organized defense against antisemitism has ever been able to conquer popular anti-Jewish sentiment, and, in fact, very few have even tried. Therefore, the focus here will be on the exploiters of popular Jew-hatred and the efforts to disarm them.

It took several years for Jews in Germany to formulate a response to the sustained threat against their rights and well-being. A number of historically based attitudes and experiences first had to be overcome. For example, the tortuous granting and withdrawing of legal equality for German Jews during the first

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Clio Press, 2005), 1:24–25. On Marr see M. Zimmermann, *Wilhelm Marr: The Patriarch of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> See R. S. Levy, “Setting the Pattern,” in *The Downfall of the Anti-Semitic Political Parties in Imperial Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975). Expectations of just how long it would take to vanquish the Jews varied greatly among antisemitic activists.

half of the nineteenth century helped keep them in perpetual insecurity. When Emancipation came in 1869, it was not because of a popular mandate or the result of an imaginary Jewish power but a gift from the liberal-minded North German Reichstag. Like their antisemitic enemies, many Jews believed that Jewish emancipation was conditional, a contractual agreement. Civil equality, according to this view, was not essentially an inalienable right. Jewish emancipation had come because many non-Jews had finally recognized their worthiness. Implicit in emancipation, to German Jews, was the faithful fulfillment of their side of the contract—continuing to be exemplary citizens and demonstrating the ability to become good Germans. In their anxiety to show themselves good Germans, however, Jews hesitated to defend their own cause, concerned about appearing to non-Jews as a special interest group that needed protecting. To make a fuss would only give more ammunition to the antisemites. To ask openly for special intervention by the state would be tantamount to asking for a privileged status, akin to that enjoyed by “court Jews” of earlier centuries. Many were reluctant even to concede that Jews were the real target of antisemitism, theorizing that it was really a matter of displaced social protest, or an attack on liberalism, or on modernity in general.<sup>3</sup> Many of the problems German Jews wrestled with before entering an active struggle against antisemitism were replicated in France, Austria, Britain, and America. The compelling reason for not launching a frontal attack on their enemies was a general lack of confidence in the sympathies of the mass of their fellow citizens. This remains an issue today, and it still influences Jewish self-defense efforts.

During the 1880s, Jews in Germany made relatively slight responses to antisemitic attacks. Individuals, speaking for themselves, repeatedly countered the more infamous pamphlets of the antisemites. Part of the problem of mounting a *collective* defense, however, was the fragmentation of the Jewish community. Only antisemites were certain that Jews always and everywhere constituted a monolith. In fact, there was no acknowledged spokesperson, no agreement about what constituted Jewish identity, or how to meet the antisemitic threat. This was not only true of Germany. In defending themselves, Jews have nowhere in the modern world ever spoken with one voice.

For the most part, Jews were willing to rely on the good offices of “unimpeachably objective” Christian defenders. There were an impressively large number of such individuals willing to speak out against the “deeply shameful ... ra-

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<sup>3</sup> For a brief but illuminating discussion of the concept of antisemitism as “displaced social protest,” see S. Rohrbacher, “The ‘Hep-Hep’ Riots of 1819: Anti-Jewish Ideology, Agitation, and Violence,” in *Exclusionary Violence: Antisemitic Riots in Modern German History*, ed. C. Hoffmann et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 24–27.



cial hatred and fanaticism of the Middle Ages.”<sup>4</sup> But the help of liberal-minded Christians had its problems. For just one example, Theodor Mommsen, the great historian of Rome, had helped write the Declaration of Notables, quoted above, and then worked to gather signatures for it. He was also instrumental in rallying liberal professors at the University of Berlin, isolating Heinrich von Treitschke, after the latter’s hostile “A Word about Our Jews,” in 1879. But for Mommsen, as for many non-Jews who had supported Jewish equality, from Christian von Dohm onward, the ideal solution to the Jewish Question was the disappearance of Judaism.<sup>5</sup> Barbaric and shameful as it was for Mommsen and many others, antisemitism was most harmful in its retardation of complete Jewish assimilation, that is, the abandonment of Jewish identity. The alliance between German and Jewish liberals who carried on the fight against antisemitism was always burdened by this reality.<sup>6</sup> Although liberal ambivalence about the legitimacy of Judaism and a tendency to sometimes wish aloud that Jews would behave themselves a little better and thus disarm the antisemites, their courageous struggle against antisemitism and for a rational politics was valued and appreciated by Jewish activists. Certainly, German Christians had nothing to gain by standing with Jews against those who would deny them their rights and impugned their allegiance to Germany.

When the first avowed antisemite was elected to the Reichstag in 1887, and when he was joined by fifteen others in the elections of 1893, the “silence of the Jews”—a situation much lamented by the already existing, largely Christian and liberal, *Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* [Association for the Defense against Antisemitism]—the hesitancy to act in their self-defense, in as united a way as possible, was finally overcome. The *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* [Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith] began to take shape in 1893, ultimately becoming the largest Jewish voluntary association in Germany, with approximately 100,000 individual and corporate members.

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<sup>4</sup> Quotation from the “Declaration of 75 Notables against Antisemitism” (*Berlin National-Zeitung*, November 12, 1880). Among the signatories were Theodor Mommsen, Rudolph von Gneist, and Rudolf Virchow. Original text and English translation can be found at [http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=1803](http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1803), accessed June 5, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> The Prussian official, Christian von Dohm (1751–1820), advocated Jewish emancipation in a two-volume work (1781); it inaugurated a vigorous debate on the status of Jews in civil society. See R. Liberles, “Dohm’s Treatise on the Jews: A Defence of the Enlightenment,” *Leo Baeck Year Book* 33 (1988): 29–42.

<sup>6</sup> See A. T. Levenson, *Between Philosemitism and Antisemitism: Defenses of Jews and Judaism in Germany, 1871–1932* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004). For a translation of Treitschke’s essay, see R. S. Levy, ed., *Antisemitism in the Modern World: An Anthology of Texts* (Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1991), 69–73.

Their credo was clear: “We are not German Jews but German citizens of Jewish faith.” The organization asked for no other protection than that afforded to all law-abiding citizens and committed itself to a public defense of Judaism, to a dignified assimilation, and to full participation in German life.<sup>7</sup>

The *Centralverein* developed a strategy that served as something of a paradigm for Jewish self-defense in countries wherever Jews had constitutional rights, recourse to the courts, and access to the public sphere, that is where they had meaningful options with which to defend themselves against the disenfranchisement and marginalization that organized antisemitism sought to impose. The fight against the antisemites took a three-pronged approach: the publication and broad distribution of apologetic and enlightenment literature; intervention in national, state, and municipal elections on behalf of anti-antisemitic candidates; and judicial pursuit of antisemitic libels against Judaism and/or the Jewish community. All three approaches were problematic.

The voluminous literature produced by the *Abwehr-Verein* and the *Centralverein* (henceforth *CV*) should have been sufficient to convince any fair-minded person that Jews as a group were excellent citizens, wholly committed to Germany, and valuable contributors to German science, literature, music, economic life, politics, and philanthropy. But, of course, after centuries of denigration, the accumulated sediment of folk wisdom, and culturally embedded suspicions, it was the rare German (or European) who could be described as “open-minded” on the Jewish Question. That the systematic, heavily documented refutation of libels and calumnies—the existence of a Jewish secret government, Judeo-Bolshevism, parasitism, ritual murder, treason—was produced by Jews and the “dupes” of Jews was grounds enough for many to reject the literature out of hand. In any case, the effectiveness of this aspect of the anti-anti publishing program was at best dubious. It probably only spoke to those who already did not have to be persuaded that Jews were largely okay. On the other hand, the “enlightenment” literature produced by the two organizations—evidence-based and usually utterly reliable—was relentless in its pursuit of the wrongdoings of the antisemites. The *Abwehr-Verein*’s weekly and the *CV*’s monthly newspapers, a raft of pamphlets, specialized publications, and educational lectures stigmatized the antisemites’ true motives, their run-ins with the law, their vicious internal rivalries, their lack of competence as legislators, their hypocrisy, and

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<sup>7</sup> For the complexities of the development of a Jewish response to antisemitism in Germany, see I. Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism, 1870–1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).

their damage to Germany's reputation abroad—all this may well have had a greater impact on the general public than trying to change minds about Jews.

In the imperial era, at least, respectability counted for something. The antisemites themselves constantly felt it necessary to reassure the public of their uprightness and seriousness of purpose. "Rowdy antisemitism" was pushed to the periphery of the mainstream movement; rowdy individuals, such as the infamous Hermann Ahlwardt, were shunned as an embarrassment. Another indication of the effectiveness of the efforts to expose the disgracefulness of antisemitism is how much time and effort antisemitic individuals, parties, and organizations spent trying to discredit the *Abwehr-Verein* as "lackeys of the Jews" and "Jewish auxiliaries." While the *Abwehr-Verein* was dismissed as a mere pawn of the Jews, the *CV* was taken much more seriously from its beginnings until its dissolution in the Third Reich.<sup>8</sup>

The second approach called for intervention into electoral politics. This was not unknown in other national arenas, but nowhere was it as systematically and openly pursued as in Germany by both the *CV* and the *Abwehr-Verein*. The *Abwehr-Verein* created a press service to provide German newspapers and parliamentarians with accurate information about antisemitic candidates and their agendas. Members sitting for the closely allied left-liberal parties took on the antisemites in the Reichstag and valiantly tried to get the German government to honor its own constitution when it came to the rights of Jewish citizens to serve in the civil service or as military officers. In 1912, the two organizations formed a unified election fund to support candidates willing to oppose antisemitism, even Social Democrats—a serious concession for these staunchly bourgeois-liberal defense groups. Such *overt* intervention in the electoral process was rare elsewhere. In the United States, by contrast, both the Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai B'rith and the American Jewish Committee preferred working from behind the scenes. There was a Fabian version of anti-antisemitism in that it avoided direct involvement with the electorate and sought instead to influence the influential. Ironically, they placed much less faith in the American electorate's healthy instincts than did the German organizations.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> On the *Abwehr-Verein*, see B. Suchy, "The Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus (I): From Its Beginnings to the First World War," *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 28 (1983): 205–39. On the vilification of the *Centralverein* in the imperial era, see Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism*. For Weimar, see D. Walter, *Antisemitische Kriminalität und Gewalt: Judenfeindschaft in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn: Verlag J.H.W. Dietz Nachf, 1999), 96, 99 and n. 15.

<sup>9</sup> See V. S. Woeste, "American Jewish Committee and Antidefamation Efforts in the United States," in *Antisemitism: A Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution*, ed. R. S. Levy (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio Press, 2005), 1: 16–17.

The *Centralverein* and the *Abwehr-Verein* cooperated and, in many ways, duplicated each other's efforts—with one exception. The *CV*'s unique weapon was its legal bureau. The abundant legal talent in the organization combed virtually the entire antisemitic press and analyzed reports from rank and file members of its 177 chapters about the antisemites' misdeeds. This information went into the *CV*'s newspaper but also to its legal bureau. The bureau prepared cases against those who libeled the Jewish community or incited others to racial or religious hatred but only rarely defended individuals or individual communities. This tool's effectiveness was heavily dependent on the good will of the German judiciary and other state agencies, none of which were very scrupulous about implementing equal rights for Jews. Nonetheless, the *CV* obtained several convictions against leading and lesser antisemites who alleged the defilement of meat by Jewish butchers, the torture of animals by kosher slaughterers, and the "religious necessity" for Jews to commit perjury and ritual murder. Sometimes the bureau achieved its goal by merely informing the proper state authority of an illegality. As a result of such information, the Prussian minister of the interior frequently confiscated antisemitic newspapers, pamphlets, and postcards. Without going to court, the *CV* brought the attention of officials to the slanders of state institutions in the antisemitic press. Almost all the major antisemites in the imperial era were convicted of various illegalities, and most of these cases were the result of *CV* intervention. True, the penalties were not terribly severe. For example, Theodor Fritsch, a stalwart of the movement until his death in 1933, was convicted on eight separate occasions for various libels during the imperial era, without ever feeling the need to curb his antisemitic activities.<sup>10</sup> But the damage to "antisemitism's good name" and the draining of the antisemites' limited resources should be counted as at least minor successes.<sup>11</sup>

At this point, it is perhaps fair to make a very broad generalization: the *CV* and *Abwehr-Verein* strategies won some important victories before World War I, helping to quarantine the antisemites in the Reichstag—there were only six of them left in a body of 397 after the elections of 1912. The antisemitic parties had not come close to passing a single law limiting the rights of Jews. Their inability to win over sizable numbers of Catholics and workers, insulated from organized antisemitism (if not anti-Jewish prejudices) by the Center Party and SPD, spoke to the movement's isolation in larger German society. The defense organ-

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<sup>10</sup> Walter, *Antisemitische Kriminalität und Gewalt*, 90–93.

<sup>11</sup> Count Reventlow, one of the few antisemites of the Imperial era to play a significant role in Weimar and the Third Reich, regarded the *CV* as far more effective than the *Abwehr-Verein*, singling out especially its legal and press bureaus. See his *Judas Kampf und Niederlage in Deutschland: 150 Jahre Judenfrage* (Berlin: Berlin Zeitgeschichte-Verlag, 1940), 368–69.

izations' constant harassment of powerful groups outside of parliament that made use of antisemitism for a variety of purposes was also seen to have paid off. By 1914, several of these seemed to be backing away from the use of antisemitism as a tool of mobilization. It should be said to the credit of the defense groups' leaders that they refrained from declaring victory—an end to antisemitism, to coin a phrase. They spoke of containment, not an end to the struggle. The unstoppable march of progress would finish the job. But at the very least, the disarray of organized antisemitism on the eve of the Great War had the effect of validating the tools and strategies developed by the *Centralverein* and the *Abwehr-Verein*.

These were the same tools and strategies employed during the Weimar Republic, where they miscarried abysmally. We can learn something from this failure.

The *Centralverein's* performance in the republican era has been frequently criticized as unimaginative, as not proactive enough, as blindly committed to its prewar strategies. None of these criticisms are wholly warranted. And none are totally without a grain of truth.<sup>12</sup> However, a fair-minded judgement has to take into consideration two big changes in postwar Germany: the political, social, and cultural environment in which antidefamation efforts operated; and an antisemitism much more radicalized by the lost war.

Clearly, the tried-and-true tools of the prewar years were not up to the altered postwar context. Enlightenment literature, still produced in great volume, now had to show a more skeptical public that Jews were not only good citizens, honest businessmen, contributors to, not exploiters of, German culture. The task now was to prove that Jews had not unleashed the World War, or stage-managed the Bolshevik Revolution, or that they were, as several prominent world leaders and hundreds of rabble-rousers claimed, engaged in a world conspiracy to enslave gentiles at any cost.<sup>13</sup> That German Jews served at the front, fired their

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**12** For a largely positive view, see A. Paucker, *Der jüdische Abwehrkampf gegen Antisemitismus und Nationalsozialismus in den letzten Jahren der Weimarer Republik* (Hamburg: Leibniz, 1969); an at times hostile evaluation, written as the destruction of the German Jewish community was being carried out, is A. Doskow and S. B. Jacoby, "Anti-Semitism and the Law in Pre-Nazi Germany," *Contemporary Jewish Record* 3 (1940): 498–509. A balanced, not uncritical, view is D. Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), chap. 4.

**13** The best, most responsible, treatment of the reception of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the primary vehicle of the Jewish world conspiracy, is E. Horn and M. Hagemester, eds., *Die Fiktion von der jüdischen Weltverschwörung: Zu Text und Kontext der "Protokolle der Weisen von Zion"* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012).

weapons at Jews of other nations, died in the same numbers, and won as many Iron Crosses (proportionately) as other Germans proved a difficult sell. In a world where conspiracy thinking seemed, for a great many people, the best way of explaining the massive disruptions in an age of crisis, dispassionate studies based on empirical evidence, reasoned argument, and respect for one's audience were powerless.<sup>14</sup>

The *Centralverein* struggled on and, far from becoming passive or remaining mired in the past, it showed a willingness to try new measures and step up its interventions. It reached out to the Catholic Bavarian People's Party regionally and the SPD nationally. While both proved valuable allies, for neither of these parties was fighting antisemitism a top priority. The *CV's* enlightenment literature dispensed with some of its more gentlemanly self-restraint and began using the no-holds-barred rhetoric of its enemies. Earlier than most, it recognized the Nazi threat as the most serious. Its once most significant weapon, however, the pursuit of antisemites through the judicial system, lost its potency in the chaos of the Republic. A conviction in the Kaiser's courts had carried with it a certain stigma; it could damage and sometimes even end the careers of antisemites. A conviction in the courts of the "Jew Republic," on the other hand, was effectively exploited as a badge of honor by Nazis and other radical right antisemites. It was proof of the power of the Jews and their ruthlessness that honest Germans, trying to save their country from extinction, were fined or jailed, martyrs to the truth.

The *CV*, mindful of this danger, nonetheless brought forward major suits in every year of the Republic—sometimes in opposition to its own rank and file members, who were worried about the reaction of the public to this sort of "pushiness." Even though the Republic's judiciary was somewhat more inclined than the Kaiser's to accept *CV*-initiated suits, it is difficult to see much of a positive effect. Once again an apt example is Theodor Fritsch, who was convicted eight times during the imperial era—and had not all that much to say about it then—was convicted a further nine times after the war—and never stopped talking about his victimization as evidence of malign Jewish power. Among antisemites, the convictions of their leaders became a credential, evidence of their courage to continue the struggle at any cost. Weimar legal institutions did not have enough authority in the eyes of the general public to make them effective weapons against organized antisemitism. The lesson here is that without a stable state

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<sup>14</sup> See B. E. Crim, *Antisemitism in the German Military Community and the Jewish Response, 1914–1938* (Lanham: Lexington, 2014).

structure, found to be legitimate in the eyes of most of its citizens, a judicially-based defense against antisemitism has little prospect of even limited success.<sup>15</sup>

The second change that rendered anti-antisemitism relatively helpless was in the nature of organized antisemitism itself. In a milieu radically altered by war and revolution, violent antisemitism—in word and deed—came to dominate the Weimar Republic. The Nazis and their many rivals on the radical right spoke and wrote openly of murder, assaulted Jews in the streets, vandalized their businesses, desecrated cemeteries and synagogues, and reviled the laws and institutions of the Republic, as they did so. There had been radical outliers among the antisemites of the imperial era, but the great majority were conventional in their outlook, convinced that legal changes, legally arrived at, could solve the Jewish Question. Not many of them were left by the 1920s; they had been supplanted by activists who scorned such conventional notions of the way to fight the Jews. They debated among themselves the virtues of “*Pogromantisemitismus*” and rejected parliamentary solutions as hopelessly naïve.

The *Centralverein* was not intellectually or physically equipped to engage with this new sort of antisemitism. The number of people willing to act against Jews was greater; the number willing to have others act in their name was also greater. The *CV*'s erstwhile liberal allies became intimidated and started falling away during the end-phase of the Republic. The *Abwehr-Verein* eventually voluntarily disbanded. The *CV*'s publications aimed specifically at well-meaning non-Jews lost subscribers and, at the end, could not even be delivered in plain brown wrappers. For the first time since the emergence of organized antisemitism in the 1880s, the Jews were without influential gentiles to defend them.

And this sad fact constitutes the second lesson to be learned from the German case study. The *Centralverein* certainly knew that without the engagement of German society, there was no winning the battle against antisemitism. Whatever Jews said then and say today in their self-defense, no matter how moderately expressed, evidence-based, or intelligently presented, immediately confronts a deeply embedded culture of doubt and denial in a large part of its intended audience. When, by contrast, antisemites like Otto Glagau wrote in the 1870s, claiming 90 percent of the fraudulent bankruptcies that accompanied the Crash of 1873 were perpetrated by Jews, he did not feel the need to cite a shred of hard evidence—he was that confident he would be believed by his readers. In such a prejudicial environment, Jews needed then and still need in the present day allies in the defense of their rights, allies from all walks of society.

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15 The best guide to the *CV*'s defense against antisemitism in the Weimar era remains Walter, *Antisemitische Kriminalität und Gewalt*.

True, what these people of good will say is also often impugned, but that they have so little to gain by standing up for decency in the public sphere, for rational politics, and for the well-being of their compatriots is plain to see for all but the most jaundiced. In Europe and America, Jews have always had such allies and usually in significant numbers. When they have lost them, when they have been abandoned, their chances of fending off antisemitism shrink to the vanishing point. They cannot do it alone.

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Doron Rabinovici

# The Jewish Response to Antisemitism in Austria Prior to the Anschluss

In Austria, during the period of the monarchy as well as in the First Republic, from the late nineteenth century till 1933, antisemitism was not only part of the silent consensus but was loudly expressed by the bourgeois parties. Both Christian Socialists, the major conservative political faction, and German Nationalists, the movement which sought the creation of a Greater Germany, along with the implementation of antisemitic and anti-clerical policies, competed in their hatred of Jews. Even the Social Democrats were not immune to the enemy image of the *Jud* (Jew) and used anti-Jewish caricatures in their propaganda.<sup>1</sup>

In 1897 Karl Lueger, who launched the first antisemitic mass movement in the capital, won the mayoralty of Vienna on a radically anti-Jewish platform. His concept of success became Hitler's populist model. It was in Austria that Hitler's worldview had been shaped. He turned elements of two political trends of the middle class into his theory and practice: racial German nationalism found in the all-German movement of Georg Ritter von Schönerer and charismatic leadership of the masses and antisemitic populism, inspired by Karl Lueger.<sup>2</sup>

In order to understand Jewish responses to antisemitism, let us offer some details about the Jews in Austria at the time: Vienna was the German-speaking city with the largest portion of Jews in its population. In the bureaucratic and dynastic center of the reactionary Catholic Habsburg monarchy, the "Jew" was perceived as the leading representative of social change, a symbol of modern times as well as of old monotheism. In Vienna, the residential capital of a multinational state, Jews, who lived in a hub of various nationalisms and coerced assimilation, became the target of all prejudice.

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**Note:** This text is based on the author's study: *Instanzen der Ohnmacht: Wien 1938–1945. Der Weg zum Judenrat*. Frankfurt/Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 2000. Translated also as: *Eichmann's Jews – The Jewish Administration of Holocaust Vienna, 1938–1945*. Transl. N. Sommers. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011.

1 Cf. L. Spira, *Feindbild "Jud": 100 Jahre politischer Antisemitismus in Österreich* (Vienna: Löcker, 1981).

2 Cf. B. Hamann, *Hitlers Wien: Lehrjahre eines Diktators* (Munich: Piper, 1997); D. Rabinovici, *Instanzen der Ohnmacht: Wien 1938–1945. Der Weg zum Judenrat* (Frankfurt/Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 2000); H. Witek and H. Safrian, *Und keiner war dabei: Dokumente des alltäglichen Antisemitismus in Wien 1938* (Vienna: Picus, 1988), 13.

The greater part of the Jewish population came from the eastern regions of the monarchy. Of the 175,000 Jews who lived in Vienna in 1910, no more than one-fifth were born in the capital.<sup>3</sup> Most were without a secure income: only a minority were members of the bourgeois middle class and even fewer belonged to the upper class.

According to the census of 1934, there were 191,481 Austrian Jews—2.8 percent of the total population. On March 11, 1938, only 185,028 were said to be still in the country, although the stream of Jewish refugees from the Third Reich flowed non-stop.<sup>4</sup> The regional Zionist association, the *Zionistischer Landesverband*, was subdivided into eighteen sections. In total, there were 82 Zionist groups, with 12,000 members.

The politically liberal, “non-national-Jewish” *Union of Austrian Jews* had approximately 3,000 members.<sup>5</sup> Twenty-four associations were devoted to nurturing science and culture. For decades, the *Union of Austrian Jews* had been the strongest faction in the Viennese Jewish Community, the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien*. The name is no coincidence. The word Jewish was not acceptable to the monarchy because the Jews were expected to assimilate. Officially, the religion was therefore Mosaic, not Jewish. The *Union of Austrian Jews* reigned supreme the most in the *Kultusgemeinde* until 1932.

In the first postwar elections in 1920 it gained 20 of the 36 mandates. However, the ratios soon changed, leading to coalitions of various parties. In 1924, the *Union* formed an election bloc with the middle-class *General Zionists* and the Orthodox *Adass Jisroel*, excluding the newly established *Social Democratic Party*, the religious social *Zionists of the Misrachi* and the Orthodox *Beth El*. In 1928 the election alliance shifted again. The *Union* and *Adass*, jointly, were able to obtain 18 of the 36 mandates.<sup>6</sup> Both Jewish factions dissociated themselves from any Zionist, that is, national Jewish self-definition.

Declaring that it was a “non-national-Jewish” party, the *Union* proudly proclaimed that it wished to represent “not Austrian Jews but Jewish Austrians.”<sup>7</sup> It

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3 Cf. H. P. Freidenreich, *Jewish Politics in Vienna 1918–1938* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 5, 211.

4 Cf. H. Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung: Die Juden in Österreich, 1938–1945* (Vienna: Herold, 1978), 13.

5 Cf. Überblick über das jüdische Organisationswesen im Lande Österreich, Josef Löwenherz an Adolf Eichmann, Wien, 4. Jänner 1939; Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, A/W 165, 1.

6 Cf. Freidenreich, *Jewish Politics in Vienna*, 219.

7 Cf. J. Ornstein, ed., *Festschrift zur Feier des 50-jährigen Bestandes der Union Österreichischer Juden* (Vienna: Union Österreichischer Juden, 1937), 61, 65.

was not that the *Union* did not want to take a self-assured Jewish position, nor was it by any means an advocate of assimilation, but it defended the Austrian state and hoped for equality under constitutional law and emancipation on the tide of progress. The *Union of Austrian Jews* tried to counter antisemitism in the courts of law, or through interventions and appeals to politicians. Its attempts to come to terms with discrimination and prejudices demonstrate how they had faith in the institutions of state. Although it sought to counter antisemitism with patriotism, to the antisemites, as well as to the majority of society, Jews could never become “true Austrians.” Many Jews were supposedly assimilated, but paradoxically, the term “Assimilanten” was only used for people who were regarded as Jews by the majority of Austrians.

The *Union's* decline was a consequence of frustration with the notion of an emancipatory utopia in an antisemitic society. In the end, the *Union*, which had once counted on an alliance with liberal parties, had to beg “reactionary” anti-liberal, Christian Social politicians for protection from ruthless antisemitism.<sup>8</sup> On the federal level, many Jews now supported Social Democracy,<sup>9</sup> while they turned to Zionist positions within the *Kultusgemeinde*.

In 1932, the *Union* lost supremacy in the *Kultusgemeinde*. Previously, the bloc consisting of the liberal *Union* and the anti-Zionist *Adass Jisroel* had formed an election alliance with the non-Zionist Social Democrats. In 1928, the Social Democratic faction still consisted of both Zionist and non-Zionist members. The Jewish Socialists supported Social Democracy in Austria and Jewish Zionist workers in Palestine. However, in 1929 the trends separated due to controversy over the *Kultusgemeinde's* budget. The governing coalition chaired by the *Union* had decided to transfer funds to the Yishuv, the Jewish settlement in Palestine. The Socialist Zionists supported these donations, while their non-Zionist partners preferred to use the funds for the welfare of the Viennese community.<sup>10</sup>

The nature of the political discourse had changed: in the early 1920s, following a phase of revolutionary class struggle throughout Central Europe, a civil administration of Union, Orthodox, and Zionists had been formed; in 1928 the *Union* and *Adass Jisroel* united to form an Austro-patriotic coalition; in 1932 an election bloc consisting of the *Union* and *Adass Jisroel* joined the non-Zionist Social Democrats to form a non-Zionist alliance.

In 1932, the Zionist Socialists alone obtained almost as many votes as they had won together with the Social Democratic List in 1928. The great majority

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8 Cf. *ibid.*

9 Cf. Freidenreich, *Jewish Politics in Vienna*, 10.

10 Cf. *ibid.*, 103–9.

of Socialist Jews had cast their ballot for the Zionists. All Zionist factions gained votes, and they assumed the presidency of the *Kultusgemeinde*.

The oppositional *Union of Austrian Jews* complained that the Zionists' seizure of power was "mainly indebted to the [...] election right of the foreign Jews."<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, part of the *Union* was made up of a majority of "western Jewish," namely, Austrian, Hungarian, and Czech families, while many Zionists were "eastern Jews," originating in places such as Galicia.<sup>12</sup>

The Zionists advocated a different way of countering antisemitism and discrimination. In 1920, in his function as Zionist delegate to the National Council, Robert Stricker, a leading Zionist personality, introduced a bill recognizing Jewish nationality. His proposal unleashed a storm of indignation in the *Union*. The *Union* feared that such ideas would reinforce antisemitism due to the wish for differentiation. Independently of the Zionist bill, the antisemitic politician Leopold Kunschak too had demanded a law for discrimination against Jews and Jewesses as a foreign minority.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the Zionist movement was reacting to the antisemitic reality of Austria. It should be noted that after 1945, Leopold Kunschak became one of the founders of the Christian Democrat *Österreichische Volkspartei*; he stated then that in spite of the Nazis and though having been in a concentration camp himself, he was still proud to be an antisemite.

Zionism in Austria and Germany was not a rejection of German culture but a search for Jewish self-awareness. Whereas the *Union* strove to show antisemites that Jews were loyal Austrians, the Zionists wanted to prove them wrong by turning Diaspora Jews into a nation. Austrian and German Zionists wanted to establish a Jewish state in Palestine more as a haven for distressed Jews of Eastern Europe than for their own personal needs.

The position of a powerful *Bund*, namely, an independent Jewish national workers movement that was not Zionist, remained limited in Eastern Europe. The *Bund* did not exist in the German-speaking area,<sup>14</sup> and left Zionism attracting most of the Socialist members of the community.

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11 "Bericht des Präsidiums und des Vorstandes der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Wien über die Tätigkeit in den Jahren 1933–1936" (Vienna, 1936), 26–27, cited in Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung*, 311.

12 See, for instance, Leo Landau, in "Wien von 1909 bis 1939. Mitglied des Vorstandes der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde," report given to Dr. Ball-Kaduri, January 28, 1959 and February 22, 1959; Yad Vashem, 01/244; 6.

13 Cf. H. Gold, *Geschichte der Juden in Wien* (Tel Aviv: Olamenu, 1966), 49.

14 Cf. J. Bunzl, *Klassenkampf in der Diaspora: Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Arbeiterbewegung* (Vienna: Europa-Verlag, 1975).

The *Union of Austrian Jews* did not reject the Palestine settlement project. In addition, it maintained the hope of “rebuilding Erez Israel.” But its Jewish self-understanding was different: it continued to trust in emancipation as the way to overcome anti-Jewish prejudice. In contrast, while Zionist groups fought antisemitic discrimination and sought civic equality and political integration in Austria, they did not expect protection through emancipation. While the *Union* defined itself as “non-national-Jewish,” the Zionist movement refrained from demanding recognition as part of the state’s nation and demanded a return to Jewish identity. The *Union* fought the struggle against antisemitism in Austria in the courts of law and with enlightening publications. In the same vein, the Zionist *Wiener Morgenzeitung*, headed by Robert Stricker, attacked open antisemitism.<sup>15</sup> The *Union* argued in its publications that antisemitic stereotypes of the Jews were incorrect; they claimed, for instance, that the Jews had been brave soldiers in World War I. The young community rabbi Benjamin Murrelstein, later a Jewish Elder in *Theresienstadt*, wrote a book protesting an antisemitic pamphlet by Severin Grill, who had denounced the Talmud. The book was published by the *Union of Austrian Jews*, and the foreword was written by Viennese Chief Rabbi David Feuchtwang.<sup>16</sup>

Beyond internal political squabbling, Jews—whether Zionist or not—who did not intend to combat antisemitism with words alone, also got organized. The *Union of Former Jewish Front-Line Soldiers*, whose members always stressed their patriotism, organized militias for defense against Nazi attacks. One year after its founding in 1932, the Soldiers Union had 8,000 members. On the High Holidays, 800 of these former soldiers protected synagogues from assault by National Socialist gangs of thugs. Some were wounded during the clashes, others were arrested.<sup>17</sup>

Several Jewish organizations in Austria tried to challenge the canard that Jews were cowardly and not “satisfaktionsfähig” (i.e., not qualified to pick up the gauntlet). Zionist Jewish youth in the sports club *Hakoah* strove to prove the physical prowess of Jews and Jewesses.<sup>18</sup> Arthur Koestler wrote about the militant Zionist student associations: The goal of these fraternities was to prove that in fighting duels, boozing, singing, and boasting, Jews knew how to stand their ground like anyone else.

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15 Cf. Gold, *Geschichte der Juden in Wien*, 50.

16 Cf. B. Murrelstein, *Einige Fragen an Prof. Dr. P. Severin Grill O. Cist. Verfasser der theologischen Studie “Der Talmud und Schulchan Aruch”* (Vienna: Union Österreichischer Juden, 1935).

17 Cf. Gold, *Geschichte der Juden in Wien*, 62.

18 Cf. J. Bunzl, *Hoppauf Hakoah: Jüdischer Sport in Österreich von den Anfängen bis in die Gegenwart* (Vienna: Junius, 1987).

Both Zionists and non-Zionists tried to contradict and to fight the stereotypes but mostly in vain. A conflict that took place in 1934 illustrates the opposing stands between the Zionist and non-Zionist parties in the *Kultusgemeinde*. A governmental decree separated non-Jewish and Jewish pupils in a part of the Viennese school system. Collective Jewish classes were about to be instituted. A protest lodged by the presidency of the *Kultusgemeinde* on September 19, 1935, had had no impact and denominational segregation in schools remained in place. The Zionist community leadership therefore changed tactics and decided, instead of common studies, to push for independent Jewish schools. They were successful and in the same year a Jewish elementary school was opened.<sup>19</sup>

In an interview conducted in 1992, Raul Hilberg recalls his school days back then:

After all, you should not forget that already before the Anschluss life was quite difficult here for the Jewish population. There was a rumor, for instance, that separate desks for Jewish pupils would be set up. Therefore, my parents sent me to a Jewish grammar school; as my mother said, if someone has to sit at a Jewish desk, it is far better to go straight to a Jewish grammar school. Back then I was 9 years old...<sup>20</sup>

Hilberg's mother, like many members of the community and finally also the community leadership, had changed their minds when confronted with social antisemitism and political discrimination.

The *Union*, nevertheless, continued to insist on public Austrian schools since it feared the Jewish national character of an independent institution of education no less than it did state discrimination.<sup>21</sup> The Orthodox *Adass Jisroel* welcomed the governmental decree, which it perceived as an initial step toward purely denominational Jewish schools.<sup>22</sup> *Adass Jisroel* defined itself as being of Jewish denomination and of Austrian nationality. In their opinion, the Jewish religion's view of a "people" did not accord with the modern idea of a nation. *Adass Jisroel* tried to counter Christian Social antisemitism by stressing religious values and explaining that Judaism was neither a race nor a nation but merely a faith. In 1936, the Zionist factions were extremely successful in the elections, and the *Union* ceased to be the strongest Jewish party.

In 1934, Austrian democracy was abolished and the Christian Socialists, the only remaining party, formed a dictatorship. The regime was ambivalent toward

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19 Cf. Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung*, 14.

20 Interview with Raul Hilberg in *Die Presse*, December 5, 1992. Translation by the author of this article.

21 Cf. *Festschrift*, 66.

22 Cf. *Jüdische Presse*, October 5, 1934.

the Jews. While the Austrofascists and the *Ständestaat*, the so-called “Corporate State,” which was an authoritarian one-party state, granted the Jews protection from Hitler, antisemitic discrimination grew so vehement that the US government had to intervene, and on November 13, 1934, Nahum Goldman paid a visit to Mussolini on behalf of Austria’s Jews.<sup>23</sup> The policies of the antisemitic minister of education and chairman of the Christian Socialist Party, Emmerich Czermak, barred the Jewish intelligentsia from teaching, research, and the arts. On the other hand, in a typical Austrian compromise the government appointed a Jewish representative, the president of the *Kultusgemeinde*, Desider Friedmann, to the State Council.<sup>24</sup>

The Vienna *Kultusgemeinde* had to deal with Nazism and its ramifications even before the Anschluss in 1938. After the Nazis came to power in Germany, the Jewish community was faced with the consequences of Nazi government policy. The suppression of the Jews in Germany had a direct impact on the IKG in Vienna. Refugees from the German Reich streamed to Austria and had to be supported. Moreover, the anti-Jewish discrimination in Germany exacerbated the antisemitic witch hunts and exclusion from jobs in Austria.

On September 25, 1935, the *Israelite Kultusgemeinde Vienna* sent the community rabbis a letter stamped “confidential.” Although the situation in Austria was not the same as in Germany, said the letter, the *Kultusgemeinde* felt the need to articulate a warning similar to that issued in Germany, which pertained not only to the holidays “but to the behavior of Jews in the streets and in public places in general.”<sup>25</sup>

In July 1936, Austria signed an agreement with the German Reich, which, among other concessions, allowed the release of imprisoned July Putsch insurgents and the inclusion of the Nazi contact men into the government. Antisemitic discrimination saw a rise in the one-party state. The Zionist movement in Palestine was alarmed by newspaper reports about anti-Jewish incidents and discriminatory measures in Austria at the beginning of 1936. On January 22,

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23 Cf. Freidenreich, *Jewish Politics in Vienna*, 195–203; Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung*, 14–15; Gold, *Geschichte der Juden in Wien*, 64.

24 Cf. Freidenreich, *Jewish Politics in Vienna*, 193; A. Staudinger, “Völkische Konkurrenz zum Nationalsozialismus—am Beispiel des ‘Österreichischen Verbandes für volksdeutsche Auslandarbeit’,” in *Fünfzig Jahre danach: Der “Anschluß” von innen und außen gesehen*, ed. F. Kreissler (Vienna/Zurich: Europa Verlag, 1989), 52–64; A. Staudinger, “Abwehr des Nationalsozialismus durch Konkurrenz: Zur Kulturpolitik im Austrofaschismus,” in *100 Jahre Volkstheater: Theater, Zeit, Geschichte*, ed. E. Deutsch-Schreiner (Vienna: Jugend und Volk, 1989), 34–87.

25 Cf. Rundschreiben der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde, signed by Desider Friedmann and Emil Engel, Vienna, September 25, 1935, Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, P151/8.



two Zionist officials of Austrian origin went to the Austrian consul general in Jerusalem and challenged the diplomat with the latest wave of dismissals of Jewish employees from public office and the firing of the Jewish president of the Chamber of Lawyers.<sup>26</sup>

Shortly before the Anschluss, the entry of German troops in March 1938, a group of Jewish youths took up target practice at the Sievering quarry. After the National Socialists came to power, Jews were chased through the streets not only by individual gangs of thugs but also by the antisemitic mob and by militant National Socialist party groups. When the state authorities took action against the Jews, the youth Willy Stern, for example, hurried to get rid of his weapon. Stern dismantled the pistol and threw it into the Danube River. Within hours the young Jewish defense force had dissolved itself.<sup>27</sup>

After the National Socialist seizure of power all attempts at countering antisemitism had to be relinquished. Despite antisemitic fantasies, the Jewish community was not an independent, alien element within the Austrian population but an integrated and heterogeneous minority.

The Viennese Jewish community leadership supported Chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg against Hitler. When the Austrian government fixed a date for a plebiscite concerning the future of the Austrian state in order to counter pressure from Berlin, the *Kultusgemeinde* raised a considerable sum to support it.<sup>28</sup> It pinned its only hope on the continued existence of the Austrian state and was anxious to secure its own existence by means of patriotic conduct and civic loyalty. What happened in 1938 is known;<sup>29</sup> the pictures of Hitler arriving in Vienna are

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26 Cf. Dr. Egon Michael Zweig, Jerusalem, to Dr. Oskar Grünbaum, Vienna, January 22, 1936, Zionist Archives Jerusalem, S25–9817.

27 Cf. Willy Stern, interview with the author, Vienna, May 2, 1991.

28 Cf. Witek and Safrian, *Und keiner war dabei*, 41; Rabinovici, *Instanzen der Ohnmacht*.

29 See, for instance, G. Anderl, “Emigration und Vertreibung,” in *Vertreibung und Neubeginn: Israelische Bürger österreichischer Herkunft*, ed. E. Weinzierl and O. D. Kulka (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 1992), 167–338; G. Botz, *Wohnungspolitik und Judendeportation in Wien 1938–1945: Zur Funktion des Antisemitismus als Ersatz nationalsozialistischer Sozialpolitik* (Vienna/Salzburg: Geyer, 1975); Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstands, ed., *Jüdische Schicksale: Berichte von Verfolgten*, vol. 3 of *Erzählte Geschichte: Berichte von Widerstandskämpfern und Verfolgten* (Vienna: ÖBV, 1992); Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien, ed., *Trotz allem... Aron Menczer 1917–1943* (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 1993); A. Jensen, *Sei stark und mutig! Chasak we'emaz! 40 Jahre jüdische Jugend in Österreich am Beispiel der Bewegung “Haschomer Hazair” 1903–1943* (Vienna: Picus, 1995); A. Jindra, “Vertreibung und Entrechtung der Juden Wiens im Jahre 1938” (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 1990); E. Klamper, *Auf Wiedersehen in Palästina: Aron Menczers Kampf um die Rettung jüdischer Kinder im nationalsozialistischen Wien* (Vienna: Bundeskanzleramt/Bundespressdienst, 1996); A. Leonhartsberg, “Das Leben der österreichischen Juden zwischen 1938 und 1945” (diploma thesis, University

famous. The Jewish community was not prepared for the upcoming persecution. They did not hide their register. They tried to educate the Austrian public about Judaism to combat prejudices by exhibitions, books and articles. They tried to convince the antisemites of their patriotism. They turned to antisemitic Christian Social politicians to protect them from Nazis. These were not very successful projects as we know. The Austrian government did not want to fight the Third Reich and the Austrian National Socialist movement. The so-called “Anschluss of Austria” took place from the outside and from within. Under pressure from Berlin, Arthur Seyss-Inquart, who had been a member of the Austrian government since 1936, took power in March 1938. The National Socialists already controlled several provincial cities and anti-Jewish pogroms in Vienna began even before the German troops invaded. Schuschnigg resigned as chancellor, stressing that he did not want to shed any German blood.

Vienna, the city that was once the center of German speaking Jewry, a cradle of modernity and haven of emancipatory hopes for the Jews of central Europe turned into a nightmare. As we have seen, in the monarchy as well as in the First Republic, antisemitism belonged not only to the silent basic consensus but to the loudly proclaimed creed of most parties. Antisemitism in Vienna assumed a political dimension and for the first time, elections were won on an antisemitic political platform. Antisemitism was not just a tacitly agreed general mood but the overt credo of the bourgeois parties.

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of Vienna, 1986); J. Moser, “Die Entrechtung der Juden im Dritten Reich: Diskriminierung und Terror durch Gesetze, Verordnungen, Erlasse,” in *Der Judenpogrom: Von der “Reichskristallnacht” zum Völkermord*, ed. W. H. Pehle (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1994), 118–31; J. Moser, “Nisko: The First Experiment in Deportation,” *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 2 (1985): 1–30; J. Moser, “Österreichs Juden unter der NS-Herrschaft,” in *NS-Herrschaft in Österreich 1938–1945*, ed. E. Tálos, E. Hanisch, and W. Neugebauer (Vienna: ÖBV, 1988), 185–98; L. Moses, *Spaziergänge. Studien und Skizzen zur Geschichte der Juden in Österreich*, ed. P. Steines (Vienna: Löcker, 1994); Rabinovici, *Instanzen der Ohnmacht*; M. Ronzoni, “Lebensverhältnisse der jüdischen Bevölkerung in Österreich zwischen Herbst 1938 und Frühling 1939: Unbearbeitete Gesuche von jüdischen Österreichern” (diploma thesis, University of Vienna, 1985); Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung*; H. Safrian, *Die Eichmann-Männer* (Vienna/Zurich: Europa Verlag, 1993); K. Stuhlpfarrer, “Antisemitismus, Rassenpolitik und Judenverfolgung in Österreich nach dem ersten Weltkrieg,” in *Das österreichische Judentum: Voraussetzungen und Geschichte*, ed. A. Drabek et al. (Vienna: Jugend und Volk, 1974), 141–64; K. Stuhlpfarrer, “Nationalsozialistische Verfolgungspolitik 1938 bis 1945,” in *Wellen der Verfolgung in der österreichischen Geschichte*, ed. E. Zöllner (Vienna: ÖBV, 1986), 144–54; B. Ungar-Klein, “Bei Freunden untergetaucht: U-Boote in Wien,” in *Der Pogrom 1938: Judenverfolgung in Österreich und Deutschland*, ed. K. Schmid and R. Streibel (Vienna: Picus, 1990), 87–92; H. Witek, “‘Arisierungen’ in Wien: Aspekte nationalsozialistische Enteignungspolitik,” in *NS-Herrschaft in Österreich 1938–1945*, ed. E. Tálos et al. (Vienna: ÖBV, 1988), 795–816; Witek and Safrian, *Und keiner war dabei*.

The Jewish organizations and parties tried to find strategies against the rise of antisemitism. For decades, the “non-Jewish-national” politically bourgeois liberal-minded *Union of Austrian Jews*, the strongest fraction in the Viennese Jewish Community tried to counter antisemitism at the court or through appeals to politicians. In the attempt to come to terms with discrimination and prejudice, it trusted in the institutions of the state. It believed in Jewish emancipation and patriotism. The Zionist parties gained the supremacy in the *Kultusgemeinde* in 1932 and refrained from striving for recognition as part of the state’s nation. They demanded a return to Jewish identity.

Several cultural and social Jewish organizations tried to challenge the prejudice against Jews. They tried to prove strength and courage. But no Jewish strategy was able to overcome the antisemitic furor, to stop the anti-Jewish discrimination and propaganda of the Austrian dictatorship since 1934, let alone to prevent the rise of National Socialism.

But the Austrian situation prior to 1938 may help us to understand the situation in Nazi Vienna. The German troops marching into Austria on March 12, 1938, were met by cheering crowds. Never again was the invading army to be greeted with such unflagging enthusiasm as it crossed a border. The Nazis did not have to fear general opposition to their Jewish policy in Austria. On the contrary, the authorities could count on a mass of profiteers and sympathizers; at the same time, they underestimated the zeal with which their policies would be pursued. The Jews of Vienna were not victims of a policy coming from without. The excessive response and the plundering, which were quite different to what had happened in Germany, contributed to the distinctive ambiance in Nazi Vienna. Moreover, they had already started before the German troops crossed the border.

The Jewish community had placed all of its hopes against the national socialist threat in the continued existence of the Austrian state and attempted to safeguard its existence through patriotic compliance and loyalty but in vain. It could not rely on the solidarity of the non-Jewish population. The Jews of Vienna were made to realize suddenly that the Vienna that they had regarded as their home had in fact become a trap.

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Matthias Küntzel

# Nazi Propaganda in the Middle East and its Repercussions in the Postwar Period

*Antisemitism based on the notion of a Jewish world conspiracy is not rooted in Islamic tradition but, rather, in European ideological models. The decisive transfer of this ideology to the Muslim world took place between 1937 and 1945 under the impact of Nazi propaganda. Important to this process was the development of Islamic antisemitism—a particular form of Jew-hatred, based on the fusion of Islamic anti-Judaism from the old scriptures with modern European antisemitism. This paper shows how Islamic antisemitism became popularized within the Arab world by the booklet “Islam and Jewry” from 1937 and via the Arabic-language program broadcast by a German shortwave transmitter between April 1939 and April 1945. It also deals with the aftereffects of Nazi propaganda for the Arab world that paved the way for the Arab’s full-scale war against the Jews of Mandatory Palestine in 1948.*

Until 1937, the Nazi government rejected Arab offers of cooperation: It was anxious not to jeopardize British appeasement of Berlin by activities in the Middle East, especially since the Mediterranean fell within the sphere of responsibility of Germany’s Italian ally. In June 1937, however, Berlin revised this approach. The trigger was the proposal from the British Peel Commission for the division of the Palestine Mandate territory into a smaller Jewish and a larger Muslim-Arab state. The formation of a Jewish state “is not in Germany’s interest,” was the instant response of Foreign Minister Konstantin von Neurath. “Germany therefore has an interest in strengthening the Arab world as a counterweight against such a possible increase in power for world Jewry.”<sup>1</sup> Strengthening the Arabs against the Jews—it is true that Berlin initially pursued this new course surreptitiously, lest it alienate London. Nevertheless, the scale of the operations now set in motion was impressive.

The Nazi government began to supply money and weapons to antisemites such as the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin el-Husseini, who led the “Arab Revolt” between 1936 to 1939. During those years, moderate Palestinian Arab forces that were seeking coexistence with the Zionists had not yet been marginalized. This changed when the Nazis put all their weight on the Mufti’s scale. “The Mufti himself said that it was at that time only because of German money that it had been possible to carry through the uprising in Palestine. From the outset he made major financial demands that the Nazis in very large measure met.”<sup>2</sup>

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1 Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik 1918–1945, Serie D, Band V, Dok. 569.

2 K. Gensicke, *Der Mufti von Jerusalem, Amin el-Husseini, und die Nationalsozialisten* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1988), 233–35.

In Egypt, Berlin invested more money in the Muslim Brotherhood than in any other anti-British organization. This organization, founded in 1928, used the riots in Palestine for antisemitic campaigns in Egypt, which enabled them to increase their membership from 800 in 1936 to 200,000 in 1938.<sup>3</sup> In addition to providing funds, Nazi agents organized for the Muslim Brothers so-called “Palestine meetings” and other anti-Jewish lectures and even helped the Muslim Brotherhood to produce explosives for their war against the Yishuv in Palestine.<sup>4</sup> This cooperation, which is evidenced by documents from the British National Archives, took place in complete secrecy because the Nazis did not want to alert British authorities in Egypt or London.

However, Nazi propagandists, in the course of their efforts to mobilize the Arabs against the Jews, had discovered that their racist antisemitism was met with incomprehension. “The level of education of the broad masses is not advanced enough for the understanding of the race theory,” wrote a leading Nazi in Egypt.<sup>5</sup> The instructor for propaganda at the German embassy in Tehran came to the same conclusion: “The broad masses lack a feeling for the race idea,” he explained in a letter to the Foreign Office and therefore recommended to lay “all the emphasis on the religious motif in our propaganda in the Islamic world. This is the only way to win over the Orientals.”<sup>6</sup>

As a consequence, Nazi Germany of all places started to use the Islamic creed as a door opener to gain access to the Muslim masses. “Berlin made explicit use of religious rhetoric, terminology, and imagery and sought to engage with and reinterpret religious doctrine and concepts,” reports David Motadel in his seminal work about *Islam and Nazi Germany's War*. “Sacred texts such as the Qur'an ... were politicized to incite religious violence against alleged common enemies.”<sup>7</sup> A thirty-one-page brochure in the Arabic language with the title *Islam and Jewry*, published on August 18, 1937, in Cairo, served as a main propaganda tool.

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3 Cf. A. A. M. El-Awaisi, *The Muslim Brothers and the Palestine Question 1928–1947* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), 98.

4 Cf. National Archive Kew Garden, London: FA 371/23343 Defense Security Office, Egypt, 10.09.1939—Note on German Suspects—Egypt, 13, 24, 26.

5 G. Krämer, *Minderheit, Millet, Nation? Die Juden in Ägypten 1914–1952* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1982), 278.

6 Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (PAAA), R 60690, Winkler, “Erfahrungen aus der deutschen Propagandaarbeit in Iran vom November 1939 bis September 1941: Aufzeichnung vom 10. January 1942,” 2–3.

7 D. Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's War* (London: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 2014), 76.

## “Islam and Jewry”

*Islam and Jewry* was, as far as we know, the very first text that propagated sheer Jew-hatred in an Islamic context by mixing selected anti-Jewish episodes of Mohammed’s life with the so-called wickedness of Jews in the twentieth century. It was the starting point of what I call “Islamic antisemitism”—the fusion of Islamic anti-Judaism from the old scriptures with European antisemitism.

European antisemitism, as manifested in the phantasm of the Jewish world conspiracy, was alien to the original image of the Jews in Islam. Only in the Christian tradition do Jews appear as a deadly and powerful force capable of killing even God’s only son. They were able to bring death and ruin on humanity—being held responsible for outbreaks of the plague. The Nazis believed in the phantasm of the Jews as the rulers of the world, who were thus also responsible for all its misfortunes. There was, according to their phantasm, only one way to the redemption of the world: the systematic annihilation of the Jews.

This was not the case in Islam. Here, it was not the Jews who murdered the Prophet, but the Prophet who murdered Jews: In the years from 623 to 627, Mohammed had all the Jewish tribes in Medina enslaved, expelled, or killed. Therefore, some typical features of Christian antisemitism did not appear in the Muslim world: “There were no fears of Jewish conspiracy and domination, no charges of diabolic evil. Jews were not accused of poisoning wells or spreading the plague.”<sup>8</sup> Instead, Muslims used to treat the Jews with contempt or condescending toleration. The hatred of Jews fostered in the Qur’an and in the Sunnah pursued the goal of keeping them down as dhimmis: hostility was accompanied by devaluation.

This, however, changed with the emergence of Islamic antisemitism which combines the worst images of Jews from the Muslim and from the Christian tradition. It seems appropriate to take a closer look at *Islam and Jewry*, a manifesto that researchers have largely overlooked so far.

On the one hand, the text builds on the traditions of early Islam: “The battle between the Jews and Islam began when Muhammad fled from Mecca to Medina,” we read here:

At that time the Jewish methods were already the same as today. Their weapon as ever was defamation. ... They said Muhammad was a swindler..., they tried to undermine Muhammad’s honor..., they began to ask Muhammad senseless and unsolvable questions.

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<sup>8</sup> B. Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites: An Inquiry into Conflict And Prejudice* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986), 122.



... But with this method too, as before, they had no success. So they ... tried to eradicate the Muslims.

At the same time, the text attacks the Jews in the diction of European antisemitism as “great businessmen,” “exploiters,” “microbes,” and as the perpetrators of the plague. Since Muhammad’s days, we read here, the Jews have been constantly trying to “destroy Muslims.” The brochure concludes that

The verses from the Qur’an and hadith prove to you that the Jews have been the bitterest enemies of Islam and continue to try to destroy it. Do not believe them, they only know hypocrisy and cunning. Hold together, fight for the Islamic thought, fight for your religion and your existence! Do not rest until your land is free of the Jews.<sup>9</sup>

This manifesto was an innovation in several ways. First, while the classical Islamic literature treats Mohammad’s struggle with the Jews as a minor episode in the life of the Prophet, now “Muhammad’s conflict with the Jews has been portrayed as a central theme in his career and their enmity to him given a cosmic significance.”<sup>10</sup> Second, the anti-Jewish components of Islam, which had been dormant or of less significance during the former hundred years, were suddenly invested with new life and vigour. Third, the anti-Jewish verses of the Qur’an were generalized and considered valid for the twentieth century: Converging with European racism, the Jews were attributed a certain unchanging nature with negative characteristics. Fourth, the religious patterns have been combined with elements of a paranoid conspiracy theory: The Muslims were considered to be eternal victims (“They try to eradicate the Muslims”) in order to legitimize new forms of aggression (“Do not rest until your land is free of the Jews”), which were more reminiscent of the policies of the Nazis than the attitudes of Mohammad.

During the war, Nazi Germany printed and disseminated *Islam and Jewry* nearly unchanged in several languages and editions. For example, there is proof that in 1942, the Spanish authorities confiscated about 1,500 copies of “a German propaganda pamphlet in the Arabic language called ‘The Islam and the Jews’” that had been sent to the German consulate in Tangiers. According to the German Foreign Ministry, these brochures were to have been distributed “unobtrusively” in Spanish Morocco.

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<sup>9</sup> Translated from the German version of “Islam-Judentum. Aufruf des Großmufti an die islamische Welt im Jahre 1937,” in *Islam, Judentum, Bolschewismus*, ed. M. Sabry (Berlin: Junker & Dünhaupt, 1938), 22–32.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis, *Semites*, 128.

The Spanish authorities, however, who were responsible for Tangiers, prevented this. They were of the opinion that “the distribution of such a propaganda directed against the Jewish elements in Spanish Morocco could not be permitted” and had all copies confiscated and destroyed.<sup>11</sup>

In 1943, another 10,000 copies of the same pamphlet were printed in Zagreb, this time in Serbo-Croatian (*Islam i Zidovstvo*), and distributed in Bosnia and Croatia.<sup>12</sup>

Though there is currently no overview of the spread of this pamphlet, *Islam and Jewry* might well be regarded as the forerunner of Sayyid Qutb’s notorious text *Our Struggle with the Jews* of the 1950s.<sup>13</sup> David Motadel regards *Islam and Jewry* as “one of the most significant examples of this kind of religiously charged anti-Jewish propaganda dispersed among Muslims,”<sup>14</sup> while historian Jeffrey Herf deemed this text as “one of the founding texts of the Islamist tradition, one that defined the religion of Islam as a source of hatred of the Jews.”<sup>15</sup>

The publisher of the first Arabic edition of *Islam and Jewry* was Mohamad Ali al-Taher, director of the “Palestinian-Arab Bureau of Information” in Egypt. Al-Taher was a well-known journalist from Palestine who had lived in Cairo for many years. He was, according to the Norwegian professor of Middle East Studies, Brynjar Lia, one of Amin el-Husseini’s “Palestinian contacts in Cairo” and is said to have contributed to the transfer of German Nazi money to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>16</sup> There are other archival sources that indicate a collaboration between al-Taher and German agents.<sup>17</sup>

Nonetheless, he was not the author of the pamphlet. “A distinguished Arab wrote this book about the Jews and their behavior,” wrote al-Taher in his short

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11 Zentrum Moderner Orient Berlin, Höpp-Archiv, “Beschlagnahme einer deutschen Propagandaschrift, ‘Der Islam und die Juden’ (in arabischer Sprache),” No. 01.10.015.

12 Cf. J. Lebl, *The Mufti of Jerusalem Haj-Amin el-Husseini and National-Socialism* (Belgrade: Cigoja Stampa, 2007), 311–19; Motadel, *Islam*, 196.

13 Cf. R. L. Nettler, *Past Trials and Present Tribulations: A Muslim Fundamentalist’s View of the Jews* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1987).

14 Motadel, *Islam*, 196.

15 J. Herf, “Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Nazis and the Holocaust: The Origins, Nature and After-effects of Collaboration,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 26, nos. 3 & 4 (2014): 15.

16 Cf. B. Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement 1928–1942* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1998), 179.

17 Cf. M. Küntzel, *Nazis und der Nahe Osten: Wie der islamische Antisemitismus entstand* (Leipzig-Berlin: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2019), 70–71.

preface to *Islam and Jewry* “and we greatly appreciate it.”<sup>18</sup> But who was that “distinguished Arab”?

This secret was not revealed in Egypt in August 1937 or later. It was in Germany that Amin el-Husseini was first named as the alleged author of *Islam and Jewry*. In 1938, the Berlin-based “Junker und Dünnhaupt Verlag” published the entire pamphlet under the title: “Islam-Judaism. Call of the Grand Mufti to the Islamic world in 1937.”<sup>19</sup> In subsequent editions initiated by the Nazis during the Second World War, the Mufti continued to be named as the author.

Whether el-Husseini was in fact the sole initiator and author of this booklet, however, is an open question. There is no doubt that the Nazis used this pamphlet for their own propaganda purposes. Were they also involved in its creation? On the one hand, the Arabic text is characterized by a poetic style of writing, such as can be found in other texts of the Mufti.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, the Mufti never claimed authorship.

In 1937, the Nazis were el-Husseini’s closest allies. The “only great power interested in Arab victory over the Jews of Palestine and fully trusted by the Arabs is Germany,” Fritz Grobba, the German Ambassador in Baghdad stated in a report about a visit by the Mufti’s emissaries at the beginning of January 1937.<sup>21</sup> In the summer of 1937, when the Mufti was hiding on Jerusalem’s Temple Mount, he was in contact with representatives of Nazi Germany through a middleman. At that time, Nazi propagandists had already discovered the antisemitic potential of Islam. Thus, in April 1935, the Nazi magazine *Weltkampf* published an article about the “antisemitic movement in Islam.”<sup>22</sup>

It is nevertheless still unclear how the writing and publication of *Islam and Jewry* came about and what role the Nazis played in this. In addition, we do not know what contacts al-Taher, the publisher of *Islam and Jewry*, might have had with German agents in Egypt in 1937. It is also unclear how the 1938 German translation of *Islam and Jewry* was organized and who did it. While historians have still to answer important questions about *Islam and Jewry*, the political context which facilitated the emergence of Islamic antisemitism is quite clear.

In his short preface, Al-Taher connected *Islam and Jewry* to the fight against the partition of Palestine as proposed in the 1937 Peel Plan: The Palestinian-Arab Bureau of Information is publishing this work because Muslims and Arabs

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**18** I am grateful to the Israeli Arabist and historian Dr. Edy Cohen, who discovered the original Arabic booklet and translated its cover page for me.

**19** Translated from the German version of “Islam-Judentum,” in Sabry, *Islam, Judentum*, 22–32.

**20** Verbal message from Dr. Edy Cohen.

**21** PAAA, Akten betreffend Judenfragen, Pol. VII, R 104791, Grobba, Bagdad, den 5. Januar 1937.

**22** Kureshi, “Antisemitische Bewegung im Islam,” *Der Weltkampf* 12, no. 136 (1935): 113–15.

“should know about Jews just now while the Jews seek to create a state by eliminating Muslims and Arabs.”<sup>23</sup>

The brochure itself culminates in the following call: “Do not tolerate the partition plan, for Palestine has been an Arab country for centuries and shall remain Arabic forever.”<sup>24</sup> *Islam and Jewry* was thus intended to theologize the territorial conflict between Jews and Arabs in order to prevent the realization of a partition proposal for Palestine—the first important attempt at a compromise—which had initially been met with a degree of approval from some moderate Arabs.

*Islam and Jewry* was published eleven years before the State of Israel came to existence. This fact alone contradicts the widespread assumption that Islamic antisemitism was a response to Israel’s actions. The Nazi’s engagement in this respect and at such an early stage also shows that their Islamic turn was not just a tactic due to the needs of the Second World War. Instead, the Nazis tried to mobilize and exploit the antisemitic potential, which Islamic texts can provide if you read them in a selective way. This certain way of reading the Islamic scriptures, however, started to become common in the Middle East in 1937.

“The classical Islamic literature treats [Mohammed’s] struggle with the Jews as a relatively minor episode in the career of the Prophet,” observes Bernard Lewis. In modern times, however, Lewis continues,

under external influences which are easily recognizable, Muhammad’s conflict with the Jews has been portrayed as a central theme in his career, and their enmity to him given a cosmic significance. This is new, and related directly to new situations and influences.<sup>25</sup>

New situations—the uproar against the Peel plan and new “external influences”—by the Nazis for example, changed the picture of the Jews in the Middle East, indeed. And it was *Islam and Jewry* that gave the alleged Jewish enmity toward Mohammed a cosmic significance for the first time.

## Radio Zeesen

The most effective vehicle of Nazi propaganda, however, was the Arabic-language broadcasting out of Zeesen, a town with some four thousand inhabitants to the south of Berlin that once housed one of the world’s most powerful shortwave transmitters. Its influence has long been neglected by historians of the

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<sup>23</sup> According to the translation by Dr. Edy Cohen.

<sup>24</sup> Translated from the German version of “Islam-Judentum,” in Sabry, *Islam, Judentum*, 22–32.

<sup>25</sup> Lewis, *Semites*, 128.

Middle East. This author has written about it since 2005,<sup>26</sup> but in the meantime, Jeffrey Herf in his *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* and David Motadel in his *Islam and Nazi Germany's War* analysed extensively this “long-range gun in the ether” as Joseph Goebbels dubbed it. Based on new sources, both authors show how the Nazis used this propaganda tool to popularize the Jew-hatred found in early Islamic sources and radicalized it by combining it with the patterns of European antisemitism.<sup>27</sup>

Between April 1939 and April 1945, Radio Zeesen broadcast in standard Arabic every day, soon adding programs in Maghribi Arabic, and broadcasts intended for Turks, Iranians, and Indians. The Oriental Service of the radio station had absolute priority over all other foreign broadcast offices and employed around eighty staff members.<sup>28</sup> They presented the Allies in the Second World War as lackeys of the Jews and drummed the notion of the “United Jewish Nations” into the audience. At the same time, the Jews were attacked as the worst enemies of Islam.

At that time, listening to radio took place primarily in public squares or bazaars and coffee houses. Various testimonies from that period indicate that the German broadcast in the Arabic language was more popular than the BBC's broadcasts in Arab languages, for several reasons.

Firstly, its programs were professionally produced, with regular recitations from the Koran and well performed Arabic music. Secondly, there were quite popular broadcasters, such as Hajj Amin el Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, the prominent Iranian announcer Bahram Shahrokh, Taqi al-Din al-Hilali from Morocco, and the prominent Iraqi journalist Yunus al-Bahri. “Berlin could never have been able to find a better-suited man to be its propaganda instrument through the Radio,” a British intelligence report remarked about al-Bahri. “With his sharp voice, aggressive speeches, and marked ability to raise his voice, his broadcasts quickly became the earmark of Germany's Arabic service.”<sup>29</sup> Thirdly, the German transmitter—overhauled for the Olympics in 1936 in Germany—was more powerful than those of its competitors, thus ensuring a better listening experience. Fourthly, Muslims were addressed as Muslims, not as Arabs: With its

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26 Cf. M. Küntzel, “National Socialism and Antisemitism in the Arab World,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 17 (2005): 99–118.

27 Cf. J. Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Motadel, *Islam*.

28 Cf. W. Schwipps, “Wortschlacht im Äther,” in *Wortschlacht im Äther: Der deutsche Auslandsrundfunk im Zweiten Weltkrieg: Geschichte des Kurzwellenrundfunks in Deutschland 1939–1945*, ed. Deutsche Welle (Berlin: Haude & Spener'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1971), 58.

29 As cited by Motadel, *Islam*, 93.

pro-Arab shift, Berlin had discovered the antimodernist potential of Islam. German propaganda, however, propagated a politicized version of Islam. According to Motadel, “German propaganda combined Islam with anti-Jewish agitation to an extent that had not hitherto been known in the modern Muslim world.”<sup>30</sup>

Jeffrey Herf highlights the centrality of the teachings of the Koran for Germany’s Arabic propaganda as well:

It was its reading of this work and this tradition—not citations from *Mein Kampf*, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, or speeches by Hitler or Goebbels—that served as the most important entry point to Arab and Muslim listeners.<sup>31</sup>

The reception and the effectiveness of Germany’s broadcast propaganda is difficult to assess. There are indications, though, that it had a certain influence. Reader Bullard, the British Ambassador in Tehran, in 1940 wrote that

Even if we do broadcast in Persian, we cannot hope to rival the Germans in interest, as their more violent, abusive style, with exaggerated claims ... appeals to the Persian public.<sup>32</sup>

These appeals were not only to the Persians. In 1939, a British informant reported that he had passed a café in Jaffa. It was possible to listen to the German radio even outside, he wrote. Moreover, in his words, “all around the café stood Arabs—even on the nearby balconies—listening to the broadcast.”<sup>33</sup> Also instructive is another British report about the effect of Radio Zeesen on the Arabs in Palestine, written in October 1939:

In general it may be said that the middle, lower middle and lower classes listen to the Arabic broadcasts from Berlin with a good deal of enjoyment. They like the racy, “juicy” stuff which is put over; they are amused at the slanderous and libelous attacks on British personalities. ... What the average Palestine Arab does imbibe, however, is the anti-Jew material. This he wants to hear and to believe; and he does both. To that extent German propaganda is definitely effective.<sup>34</sup>

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**30** Motadel, *Islam*, 97.

**31** Herf, *Nazi Propaganda*, 197.

**32** R. Bullard, *Letters from Tehran: A British Ambassador in World War II Persia* (London: Tauris, 1991), 28.

**33** Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, Report by Kapeliuk, 18. October 1939 as cited by R. Wildangel, *Zwischen Achse und Mandatsmacht: Palästina und der Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2007), 359.

**34** British National Archive, London, WO 208/1701, Palestine Historical. Monthly appreciations German Nazi activities in Palestine. Oct '38–Oct '39.

In spring 1944, a “Weekly Review of Foreign Broadcasts,” done for the US Military Intelligence Division concluded:

the anti-Jewish theme has in the past constituted a good half of the German propaganda directed towards the Near East. ... In recent weeks the Arabic voice in Berlin has surpassed all its previous records in inciting violence in Palestine.<sup>35</sup>

The bulk of the radio’s verbal material was indeed devoted to whipping up anti-semitic hatred. “The defense of your life is a duty which can only be fulfilled by annihilating the Jews” was the message on July 7, 1942. “Kill the Jews, burn their property, destroy their stores ... Your sole hope of salvation lies in annihilating the Jews before thy annihilate you.”<sup>36</sup> At the same time, the anger of Radio Zeesen turned on fellow Arabs who entertained the possibility of coexistence with Jews in Palestine:

Noble Arabs! You should maintain your policy of boycotting the Jews. You should punish those who ignore the boycott. All Arabs who collaborate with the Jews should be destroyed before they help the Jews destroy us.<sup>37</sup>

However, according to Herf,

the fusion of antisemitism with anti-Zionism was the key ideological weapon of the Nazi regime in its efforts to win support from Arabs and Muslims in North Africa and the Middle East.<sup>38</sup>

From April 1939 to April 1945, Radio Zeesen constantly urged their listeners to prevent the birth of a Jewish state and exterminate the Jews living in Palestine. It broadcast, for example, that the Jews would not be satisfied until they had made “every territory between the Tigris and the Nile Jewish.” If they succeeded,

there will remain not a single Arab Moslem or Christian in the Arab world. Arabs! Imagine Egypt, Iraq and all the Arab countries becoming Jewish with no Christianity or Islam there.<sup>39</sup>

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**35** Weekly Review of Foreign Broadcasts, F.C.C., No. 118, 3/4/44 “Near and Middle East,” as cited by Herf, *Nazi Propaganda*, 219.

**36** Voice of Free Arabism, July 7, 1942, 8:15 pm, “Kill the Jews before They Kill You,” Kirk to Secretary of State, No. 502 (July 21, 1942), as cited by Herf, *Nazi Propaganda*, 126.

**37** Arab Nation, April 30, 1943, 9:00 pm, “Has the Jewish Danger Passed?,” Kirk to Secretary of State, No. 1047, Cairo (May 15, 1943), as cited by Herf, *Nazi Propaganda*, 171.

**38** Herf, *Nazi Propaganda*, 178.

**39** Berlin in Arabic, September 8, 1943, “Talk: The Ambitions of the Jews,” Kirk to Secretary of State, No. 1313, Cairo, September 23, 1943, as cited by Herf, *Nazi Propaganda*, 57.

The more impending the defeat of Germany, the shriller the warnings of Radio Zeesen about the consequences for Palestine should “World Jewry” take advantage of its opportunity.

Radio Zeesen stopped broadcasting in April 1945. However, the echoes of this propaganda, which fell on receptive ears due to anti-Jewish elements of the Qur’an and other Islamic sources, continued to reverberate. While the view of the British Foreign Office, which in 1946 “spoke of Arab hatred of the Jews being greater than that of the Nazis,” may be exaggerated,<sup>40</sup> it is obvious that wartime Nazi propaganda contributed to increased hostility after the war.

## Antisemitic Mobilization against the New-Founded Israel

The significance of Nazi propaganda became clear on November 2, 1945, the anniversary of the Balfour declaration. On that day, the worst anti-Jewish pogroms in Egypt’s history were perpetrated in Cairo: Demonstrators “broke into the Jewish quarter, plundered houses and shops, attacked non-Muslims, and devastated the adjacent Ashkenazi synagogue before finally setting it on fire.”<sup>41</sup>

This Arab mob was organized by the Muslim Brotherhood, which, after 1945, turned out to be the most important political force in Egypt with 1,500 branches and at least 500,000 members. By 1948, these figures had doubled or even tripled.<sup>42</sup>

They tirelessly defended the war crimes perpetrated by Amin el-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem. “Should one hair of the Mufti’s be touched, every Jew in the world would be killed without mercy”—threatened their newspaper in 1946—some months after the Holocaust.<sup>43</sup>

Utilizing the arguments of the Nazis, the Muslim Brotherhood started to radicalize the Arab street in their struggle against the Jewish state. They adopted the antisemitic course of Amin el-Husseini in every respect: “This hero fought Zion-

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<sup>40</sup> B. Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 34.

<sup>41</sup> Krämer, *Minderheit*, 320.

<sup>42</sup> El-Awaisi, *The Muslim Brothers*, 135.

<sup>43</sup> “One hair of the Mufti’s is worth the Jews of the Whole World,” Al Ikhwan Al Muslimun, June 20, 1946, Tuck to Secretary of State, No. 1648 (June 24, 1945), as cited by Herf, *Nazi Propaganda*, 242–43.



ism with the help of Hitler and Germany,” they proclaimed in 1946. “Germany and Hitler are gone, but Amin Al-Husseini will continue the struggle.”<sup>44</sup>

Historians of the Middle East agree that it was to a large extent the pressure from the “Arab street” that had previously driven a reluctant Arab League into a full-scale war against Israel in 1948.<sup>45</sup> Egypt’s Premier Nuqrashi, for example, was against the military assault that took place in 1948. However, he said he was swayed by public opinion that “was all in favor of the war, and considered anyone who refused to fight as a traitor.”<sup>46</sup>

When the Arab League met in Cairo in December 1947, the Brotherhood brought, for example, 100,000 demonstrators into the streets. According to a contemporary account, on the terrace of the Savoy Hotel where the meeting of the League took place, “the Prime Ministers of the Arab states stood with worthy and grave expressions acknowledging, fez in hand, the salutes of the passing parade of believers.”<sup>47</sup> The Arab League responded to this demonstration by, for the first time, agreeing to the training of volunteers for jihad in Palestine. Thus, it was under the impact of the Brotherhood’s mass mobilization that a reluctant Egypt government began its active participation in the fighting in Palestine.

In addition, while the Yishuv had to defend itself against guerrilla attacks, using all necessary means to do so, the Muslim Brotherhood spread rumors of horrific Zionist atrocities against Arabs in Palestine. Thus, they “created an atmosphere in which war seemed the only logical and natural process,” writes Thomas Mayer. “The [Brotherhood] Society succeeded in drawing Egypt into a full-scale military initiative in Palestine.”<sup>48</sup> The American embassy in Damascus confirmed this assessment. Without referring to the Brotherhood by name, they identified “the combined momentum of their own rhetoric and pressure from below” as the cause of the Egyptian invasion of Israel. The “Government appears to have led public opinion to the brink of war and [is] now unable to retreat.”<sup>49</sup>

Only in December 1948, after this war was lost, did the Egypt government dissolve the branches of the Muslim Brotherhood and ban the organization.

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<sup>44</sup> As cited by Herf, *Nazi Propaganda*, 244.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. M. Küntzel, “The Aftershock of the Nazi War against the Jews, 1947–1948: Could War in the Middle East Have Been Prevented?” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 26 (2014): 38–53.

<sup>46</sup> F. A. Gerges, “Egypt and the 1948 War,” in *The War for Palestine. Rewriting the History of 1948*, ed. E. L. Rogan and A. Shlaim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 154.

<sup>47</sup> “Mit deutschem Gruß für Palästina,” *Spiegel* 51 (1947): 11.

<sup>48</sup> T. Mayer, “The Military Force of Islam: The Society of the Muslim Brethren and the Palestine Question: 1945–48,” in *Zionism and Arabism in Palestine and Israel*, ed. E. Kedourie and S. G. Haim (London: Frank Cass, 1982), 110–11.

<sup>49</sup> R. Memminger, Damascus to Secretary of State, May 9, 1948, USNA, 800 Syria/9–548, as cited by Morris, *1948*, 181.

Why were the Arab rulers not able to dissolve the militant and antisemitic demonstrations of the “Arab street” in the years before?

Probably, those rulers were obsessed by an antisemitic kind of anti-Zionism, as well. Thus, two years after the liberation of Auschwitz, Ibn Saud described the Jews as an “aggressive people” whose ambitions “extend to all the Arab states where holy places are to be found.”<sup>50</sup> Lebanese Foreign Minister, Hamid Frangieh, regarded “the expansionist efforts of Zionism a serious threat to peace.”<sup>51</sup> Iraqi Crown Prince Abd al-llah considered Zionism “the greatest tragedy of the twentieth century,”<sup>52</sup> while an Egyptian member of parliament viewed it as “a cancer in the Arab body.”<sup>53</sup> It is no wonder, therefore, that an assembly of Arab kings and princes convened by Egypt’s King Farouk in May 1946 struck the same note. Their resolution states as follows:

We have decided that Zionism poses a danger not only to Palestine but also to all other Arab countries and to all nations of Islam. Therefore it is the duty of all Arab countries and Islamic countries to resist the danger of Zionism.<sup>54</sup>

The paranoid delusion that a few thousand Zionists in Britain and the US together with the Yishuv in Palestine constituted a dangerous global power that threatened the whole Islamic world had nothing to do with reality but much to do with the cumulative impact of the years of relentless Nazi propaganda since broadcasts from Berlin had permanently claimed that Zionism was inherently expansionist.

## Conclusion

In 1948, there were, of course, also other motives to prevent the creation of the state of Israel—for example, the Egypt’s rulers desire to counter the territorial

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50 *Archiv der Gegenwart*, United Press, “Telegramm von König Ibn Saud und Präsident Truman,” entry of October 18, 1946, 901.

51 *Archiv der Gegenwart*, “UN-Bulletin, Declaration by Hamid Frangieh on behalf of the Arab League,” entry of July 22, 1947, 1151.

52 FO 371/45237/E 2090, Oriental Department to Dickson, 26 March 1945, as cited by M. Litvak and E. Webman, *From Empathy to Denial: Arab Responses to the Holocaust* (London: Hurst, 2009), 39.

53 *Al-Ahram*, 6 and 7 March 1946, as cited by Meir and Webman, *Empathy*, 41.

54 Third Section of the Resolutions of the Anshas Summit of May 28 and 29, 1946, as cited by Z. Elpeleg, *Through the Eyes of the Mufti: The Essays of Haj Amin*, trans. R. Kessel (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2009), 194.

ambitions of Emir Abdullah from Trans-Jordan, or the feeling that Palestine had become a test of the Arabs independence vis-à-vis the imperial powers. However, the aftereffect of Nazi propaganda played a crucial role, as well. Nazi Germany's efforts to incite Arabs against the Jews changed the perception of the Jews within Islamic societies. While individual editions of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were already circulating in Palestine during the 1920s, European conspiracy theories became popular only since the late 1930s. In addition, Radio Zeesen strengthened an exclusively anti-Jewish reading of the Islamic scriptures and agitated in an antisemitic manner against the Zionist project.

Nazi propaganda thus contributed to the fact that the end of World War II was followed by a twofold division of the world. The one division between politico-economic systems is known as the Cold War. The second cleavage, merely covered over by the Cold War, has to do with the persistence of National Socialist modes of thought particularly in the Arab world. In her report on the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961, Hannah Arendt cast her gaze into this abyss:

the newspapers in Damascus and Beirut, in Cairo and Jordan did not conceal either their sympathy for Eichmann nor their regret that he "did not finish the job"; a radio broadcast from Cairo on the opening day of the trial even included a little sideswipe at the Germans, reproaching them for the fact that "in the last war, no German plane had ever flown over and bombed a Jewish settlement."<sup>55</sup>

Obviously, there was not only a temporal proximity between the Arab war against Israel and the Nazi war against the Jews three years before but also an ideological proximity. In this respect, the war of 1947/48 might appear as an aftershock of the Nazi war before.

In today's Middle East, a rhetoric that was influenced by Nazi sources still prevails. To this day, Palestinian leaders continue to refuse to recognize the Jewish state by using those eighty-year-old pretensions. The more that connection is understood, the easier might it become to free the lives of Palestinians and Arabs from the idiocy of antisemitism.

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<sup>55</sup> H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: Ein Bericht von der Banalität des Bösen* (Munich: Piper, 1986), 81.

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**Comprehending Shoah and Post-Shoah  
Antisemitism**



Dina Porat

# Is the Holocaust a Unique Historical Event? A Debate between Two Pillars of Holocaust Research and its Impact on the Study of Antisemitism

The following words of philosopher Eliezer Schweid, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, regarding the uniqueness of the Holocaust, may serve as a starting point for our issue:

We will begin by citing a fact obvious to all readers of the wide-ranging literature on the Shoah: Philosophers have no monopoly on the question of whether the Shoah was a completely aberrant, unprecedented event that cannot be compared with any other historical or contemporary occurrence, or whether it can be discussed together with other attempts at genocide, especially with contemporary outbreaks of mass killing. Almost everyone who studies the Shoah addresses this question seriously.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, a stormy debate has been underway over the past two decades in the research world, with reverberations in society at large, over the question of whether the Holocaust was a unique historical event—meaning, an event possessing unique attributes that are characteristic of it alone—or a genocide that, although extreme, should nonetheless be located on the continuum of genocides that occurred before and after it.<sup>2</sup> Put differently: Should the Holocaust be examined exclusively as an event that was planned and carried out against the Jewish People and regarded as a national catastrophe and a Jewish tragedy alone? Or should it be studied as an event whose implications transcend the unique context of a specific national group of victims and that holds international significance from which we can also derive lessons on a human and universal level? Could formulations such as “an unprecedented event with unique characteristics” settle the debate?

In this article, I will try to examine the views of Israel Gutman (1923–2013) and Yehuda Bauer (b. 1926), the two most prominent Jerusalem-based Holocaust

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1 E. Schweid, “Is the Shoah a Unique Event?” in *Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust*, ed. S. T. Katz, S. Biderman, and G. Greenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 221.

2 One example of this debate is the controversy that erupted around an international conference on genocide that was held at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on June 29, 2016.



researchers, who were active in Israel in the decades following the Holocaust—on these questions in general, and the question of the uniqueness of the Holocaust in particular, even before the onset of the abovementioned debate. I will also explore the possible implications of their conclusions for the current research of antisemitism. To conclude, I will attempt to propose a third possibility: that there is no fundamental contradiction between these two approaches—the view of the Holocaust as wholly unique and the view of the Holocaust as an extreme and unprecedented event on the continuum—and that an effort should at least be made to bring them closer together. This third possibility is proposed here with the utmost caution and with due consideration of whether it is reasonable to propose a synthesis in the case in question. Indeed, we have learned from Georg W. F. Hegel that the wave that follows thesis and antithesis is synthesis and that the pendulum stimulating the research swings from one side to the other and back again, at least until the midpoint. However, based on an examination of the writings of Gutman and Bauer, who sometimes relate to the possibility of synthesis, can we say that these two approaches are actually two sides of the same coin and that they complete one another, because uniqueness does not preclude us from relating to and closely examining other events?

As we are dealing with the years immediately following the Holocaust—both Gutman and Bauer began writing and publishing in the 1950s—we can perhaps ask whether there is any significance to the fact that Gutman was a survivor who experienced a number of the circles of hell during the Holocaust—in the Warsaw Ghetto, in Auschwitz, in Majdanek and more—whereas Bauer’s family immigrated with him to Palestine from Prague in 1939, on the eve of the war. Could it be that Holocaust survivors hold a certain view on the subject under discussion that differs from that of those who lived in a safe place during the Holocaust? This is a sensitive question due to the broader question that underlies it, pertaining to the impact of the life circumstances of the historian or scholar on his or her conclusions. “Leaving the event as an unexplained and unresearched event fulfills Holocaust survivors’ deep mental need to give expression to their feeling that what happened to them was unique in intensity and scope,” writes one Yad Vashem employee who has been in consistent contact with survivors for many years.<sup>3</sup> Of course, historians, and survivors in general, devote themselves to researching and explaining the Holocaust and to not leaving it as an event that is unexplained and unresearched. Still, the question remains: Did the experiences of the two scholars that are the focus of this article lead them with greater

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3 E. Amir, “The Uniqueness of the Holocaust,” [in Hebrew] *Alachson* 16 (2017).

vigor to the conclusion that the Holocaust was unique, or to the opposite conclusion?

Another question that emerges from the period under discussion here is whether devotion to the Zionist idea, and to the aspiration within Israel of building research and teaching that is consistent with this idea, had as well an impact on the conclusions.

The possible influences on the research also include interpersonal relations: Gutman and Bauer would often hold lengthy conversations with Abba Kovner, the poet and Vilna ghetto underground leader and partisan, who became an original thinker and cultural leader in Israel. All three were members of *kibbutzim* of *Hashomer Hatzair*, and questions pertaining to Jewish history and the fate of the Jewish People were pressing for them. Bauer and Gutman were close friends for a number of decades, and together they established a number of infrastructure enterprises in the field of Holocaust research. Kovner was an inspiration for both men. Their personal relationship, however, did not require fundamental agreement between them, and they disagreed on a number of key issues, including a particularly extended difference of opinion regarding the uniqueness of the Holocaust. In other words, their views have neither been consistent with nor determined by interpersonal relations.

## Gutman's Approach: Uniqueness

Gutman categorically opposed defining the Holocaust as an ongoing general phenomenon or framework and locating it on a continuum of genocides that occurred before and after it. It cannot be included on a continuum of other murders that were perpetrated for territorial, religious, or ethnic reasons, as Gutman maintained:

The more I have explored the subject over the decades, the more I have come to recognize the uniqueness of the Holocaust, which cannot be turned into another episode in history.<sup>4</sup>

Nazi antisemitism also cannot be seen merely as the most extreme link in the phenomenon of antisemitism, he noted. The Nazis undoubtedly exploited the negative image that had been instilled by the church for many centuries prior to the emergence of the Nazi party, and the Jew's transformation into a Satan that opposes humanity, which, unlike all other cases in history, continued for thousands of years and served as a backdrop for murder. However, in addition

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted in D. Porat, "The Jerusalem School," [in Hebrew] *Haaretz Books*, February 4, 2009.

to the consistent elements of antisemitism, Nazism also mobilized new and different components; first and foremost was the Jews' placement "beyond the realm of humanity" and "their physical, spiritual, and cultural eradication ... as a necessity in clearing a path for the redemption of humanity." This total and apocalyptic removal was one of a kind:

The Holocaust's uniqueness stems from the role of antisemitism in general, and of racial antisemitism in particular, in the worldview of Hitler and National Socialism, and from the stages of the implementation of this worldview in the Nazi Third Reich and in the course of the war. The Holocaust is an event that stands alone in the history of humanity, which is why it has been so difficult for Jews and non-Jews alike to understand and internalize it.<sup>5</sup>

Gutman expounded his outlook in two lectures that subsequently became key articles: "The Holocaust and its Impact on Jewish History"<sup>6</sup> and "Notes and Reflections for a Discussion on the Uniqueness and Universal Nature of the Holocaust,"<sup>7</sup> a title that says simply that the uniqueness and the universal nature of the Holocaust go hand in hand with and complete one another, as "the dimensions of the crime alone endow it general human significance that transcends the history of one nation."<sup>8</sup> After examining the attributes of the totalitarian regimes in his articles, Gutman quotes Saul Friedländer, the worldwide renown scholar, who wrote:

The absolute character of the anti-Jewish drive makes it impossible to integrate the extermination of the Jews not only within the general framework of Nazi persecution, but also within the wider aspects of contemporary ideological-political behavior, such as fascism, totalitarianisms, economic exploitations, and so forth.<sup>9</sup>

Gutman's argument also finds support in the words of Nathan Rotenstreich, a leading figure in the Hebrew University, on the uniqueness of the persecution of the Jews:

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5 I. Gutman, "The Impact of the Holocaust on Jewish History," [in Hebrew] *Newsletter: The World Union of Jewish Studies* 23 (1984): 14, 15–22.

6 Ibid.

7 Cf. I. Gutman, "Notes and Reflections for a Discussion on the Uniqueness and Universal Nature of the Holocaust," [in Hebrew] *Yalkut Moreshet* 28 (1979): 77–94.

8 Ibid., 77.

9 S. Friedländer, *Some Aspects of the Historical Significance of the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1977), 7.

Even if the Holocaust can be viewed as the height of persecutions implemented against the Jews by the nations of the world, [we cannot] ignore the fact that the Holocaust is a special type of persecution, and that the difference between the persecutions is a genuinely qualitative one.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, with regard to the fundamentally anti-Jewish foundation of Nazism, Rotenstreich asks whether the Holocaust is a unique phenomenon constituting a type in itself, and answers his own question as follows:

It seems to me that despite the proximity between traditional anti-Semitism and National Socialist anti-Semitism, it is the latter that is a unique phenomenon.<sup>11</sup>

The same is true of the work of Ben-Zion Dinur, the historian who became minister of education and a leading force in Yad Vashem. Indeed, in accordance with his well-known study “Diasporas and Their Destruction,” in which he analyzes the cyclicity of the destruction of Jewish centers and the construction of others, during the Holocaust Dinur believed that the cyclicity of the destruction was part of the affliction of exile, and therefore that the Holocaust was not a new episode in our history:

It is new in its form and its scope, and its calculated organization and its menacing dimensions, but not at all in its essence.<sup>12</sup>

However, after the Holocaust, when the intensity of the loss and the tragedy became clear, he wrote:

And nonetheless, what happened to us was unique and completely different. It is something that has never before occurred. Never before has the blood of an entire nation been abandoned with this being proclaimed publicly. Before the eyes of the entire world, we were removed from the human race. Before the eyes of the entire world, we were executed and destroyed using all means and all methods. We should see things as they are and not conceal them.<sup>13</sup>

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**10** N. Rotenstreich, *On Jewish Existence in This Era* [in Hebrew] (Merhavia and Tel Aviv: Poalim, 1972), 111–12.

**11** N. Rotenstreich, *Holocaust and Revival: A Symposium* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1975), 124–34.

**12** B.-Z. Dinur, “Diasporas and Their Destruction,” [in Hebrew] in *Generations and Records: Studies and Studies in Israeli Historiography of its Problems and History*, vol. 4 of *Ben-Zion Dinur: Historical Writings* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1978), 175.

**13** B.-Z. Dinur, “Our Fate and Our War in These Times,” [in Hebrew] in *Remember: The Holocaust and Its Lesson* (Jerusalem: Yad VaShem, 1958), 36.

Jacob Talmon, the Hebrew University scholar who inspired generations of students, explored European history as the backdrop for the Holocaust and reached the same conclusion:

the world has never seen such a campaign of annihilation. Not an outburst of forces of wild religious extremism, not a wave of pogroms initiated from above, not the act of an incited mob ... but rather the act of a “legal” government that handed over an entire people to murderers ... That is how this campaign of extermination differed completely from all other massacres, mass murders, and acts of spilling blood and forsaking life in history ... The Nazis’ extermination of the Jews of Europe is different and deviates from all of these mass killings [previously referred to by Talmon] in the conscious, detailed, and precise planning that preceded it and in its systematic implementation; in the absence of a factor of emotional outburst; in the meticulously implemented decision to destroy everything, without leaving a trace; and in the prevention of any possibility of someone escaping when his turn came to be killed.<sup>14</sup>

After drawing on the writings of these colleagues, Gutman sums up by stating that the Holocaust differed from similar crimes and constituted an unprecedented event in Jewish history and the history of the world in that it was an attempt at the total murder of a people, grounded in ancient antisemitism and carried out with meticulous planning, as the world bore witness to the murder:

Obfuscating the uniqueness of the Holocaust, or integrating it into a long list of crimes, even when done with good intentions, helps distort the historical picture ... Understanding and remembering this uniqueness are the vaccine against the crime.<sup>15</sup>

And he continues with greater force:

The Holocaust is an act that is included in the complex of crimes that have been defined as genocide, but genocide does not say all there is to say about the ideological basis of “The Final Solution for the Jewish People,” even as defined in the UN Convention on the Prevention of Genocide.<sup>16</sup>

When they speak of genocide, he emphasizes, they are talking about something that has happened and that will happen again—wars and murders have occurred in human society since its inception; in this way, they negate the murder of the Jews, which by nature was a singular event.<sup>17</sup> According to Gutman, the Jews had

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**14** J. Talmon, “European History as Background for the Holocaust,” [in Hebrew] in *In the Era of Violence* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1975), 265–66.

**15** Gutman, “Notes and Reflections,” 79.

**16** *Ibid.*, 92, see points of conclusion.

**17** In conversation with Gutman while preparing the critique in Porat, “The Jerusalem School.”

no way of escaping the repercussions of racial theory, because no change of name, profession, or place—or even assimilation or conversion to Christianity—were of any help. On the contrary, religious conversion was viewed as an attempt to infiltrate and corrupt the Aryan race.

The evil spirit that gripped Germany at the time precludes us from speaking about ordinary people, Gutman maintains, with regard to *Ordinary Men*, the title Christopher Browning, the renown American historian of North Carolina University gave to his book,<sup>18</sup> a title that became a turn of phrase and a term that Gutman totally opposed. He thought that the opposite was true: that the continuously intensifying dynamics of political and military power, the course of which was dictated by ideology, resulted in the murder of the Jewish People being assigned supreme importance in the Nazis' priorities; in practice, it became one of the main war aims that an entire nation was trained to implement with cruelty so chilling that those involved cannot be characterized as ordinary people.<sup>19</sup> Gutman was the editor in chief of the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, in which he wrote the entry for "Genocide":

According to all the experts, genocide was one component of the Holocaust. However, the crime that the Nazis committed against the Jewish people in Europe involved planning; the administration of a system; the construction of extermination facilities; the forced transfer of the entire Jewish population in underhanded ways; and, above all else, assigning them [the Jews] blame and the stigma of conspirators and pests, whose physical extermination was required for the rehabilitation of society and the future of humanity. In this way, it alone constitutes a distinct type of crime that is broader and more all-encompassing than genocide.<sup>20</sup>

The approach of Gutman and his supporters can perhaps therefore be summed up in the following sentence: It was the uniqueness of Nazi ideology's approach to the Jews and its horrific implementation in reality that made the Holocaust unique.

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**18** Cf. C. R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993).

**19** Cf. Gutman, "Notes and Reflections," 23.

**20** I. Gutman and M. Mushkat, "Genocide," [in Hebrew] in *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, ed. I. Gutman (Jerusalem: Yad VaShem, 1990), 2:391–92.

## Yehuda Bauer's Approach: The Holocaust as an Unprecedented Event

Yehuda Bauer's approach to the subject developed over time. His initial remarks reflect complexity and uncertainty, which found expression in a number of his writings. This has been pointed out, for example, by Yair Auron, an Open University scholar of the Armenian genocide, who notes that Bauer regards the Armenian genocide as the closest parallel to the Holocaust but distinguishes between "genocide" on the one hand, and "Holocaust," or total extermination, on the other hand, meaning that total extermination did not occur: "Not to see the difference between the concepts, not to realize that the Jewish situation was unique, is to blur history," writes Bauer,

On the other hand, to declare that there are no parallels, and that the whole phenomenon is inexplicable, *is equally a mystification* [emphasis added—the original Hebrew text reads: "is also a mistake, one of mystification"] ... To view the Holocaust as just another case of man's inhumanity to man, to equate it with every and any injustice committed on this earth ... to say that the Holocaust is the total of all the crimes committed by Nazism in Europe, to do any or all of this is an inexcusable abomination *based on the mystification of the event* [the original Hebrew text reads: "abomination that blurs the event"]. On the other hand, to view it as totally unique is to take it out of history and out of the context of our everyday lives, and that means opening wide the gates for a possible repetition. We should properly use the term "Holocaust" to describe the policy of total physical annihilation of a nation or a people. To date, this has happened once, to the Jews under Nazism.

Therefore, at the time, at the beginning of the 1980s, Bauer preferred to make use of the term "epoch making," and also introduced a similar term: "alpine event." These original terms were not integrated into the discourse on the definition of the Holocaust, but they constitute a stage in Bauer's thinking about the event; and a few pages later, Bauer also makes perhaps the first use of the term an "unprecedented event."<sup>21</sup>

Other scholars have also addressed the development of Bauer's later thinking in the 1990s. Eliezer Schweid, who analyzed the situation using the chisel of the philosopher, wrote:

The cautious and precise among the scholars who maintain that the Holocaust was an exceptional and unprecedented event (here we refer especially to the worldview of Yehuda Bauer, according to its most recent version) acknowledge that although we can also find

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<sup>21</sup> Y. Bauer, "Against Mystification: The Holocaust as a Historical Phenomenon," [in Hebrew] in *The Holocaust: Historical Aspects* (Tel Aviv: Poalim, 1982), 75–76, 81.

similar foundations ... in other attempts at genocide, only in the Nazi attempt to murder the Jewish people, based on Nazi ideology, do we find these features playing a central, exclusive, and unadulterated role. Therefore, even if the Holocaust can be placed on a continuum of the execution of such plans, it is located at the end of the continuum, as the complete embodiment of the meaning of the concept of genocide—in terms of ideology, planning and execution—and must therefore also be characterized as exceptional and unique within it.<sup>22</sup>

We will return to the matter of similar foundations later in this article. In the meantime, we take note of Schweid's recognition of the caution and precision that characterized the development of Bauer's thinking in his aspiration to find the exact formulation. We also emphasize that according to Schweid's formulation, "exceptional" and "unprecedented" are adjectives that are mutually complementary, as opposed to contradictory.<sup>23</sup>

A second scholar who addressed the development of Bauer's later thinking is A. Dirk Moses of the University of Sydney, who pays significant attention to the writings of Yehuda Bauer and Steven T. Katz, a Boston University scholar and academic adviser to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), during the 1990s. Moses reaches the conclusion that they locate the Holocaust at the heart of Jewish life and Jewish identity. Therefore, they must necessarily resolutely insist on the uniqueness of the Holocaust, as not doing so would undermine their individual identities and their concept of collective Jewish existence. The significance that Katz and Bauer ascribe to the Holocaust has no basis, he writes, if the Holocaust is "just" another instance of mass murder that highlights human history. In his view, they also ascribe theological significance to the Holocaust, endowing its victims, and its victims alone, with the status of sanctity.<sup>24</sup> This is Moses's major argument, which he does not always develop out of respect for Katz and Bauer and their perspectives, particularly when disregarding the possibility that the linkage between Jewish identity and Holocaust memory, which all recognize, does not require us to reach the conclusion that the Holocaust was unique. Katz vehemently objects to this erroneous presentation of his views, which is not based on excerpts from his writing. Additionally, in decisive remarks that were recently published,<sup>25</sup> again Katz stresses his

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<sup>22</sup> E. Schweid, *Battle until Dawn* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Poalim, 1991), 146.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. E. L. Fackenheim, who agrees with Schweid, in "The Shoah as a Novum for History, Philosophy, and Theology," [in Hebrew] *Daat: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy & Kabbalah* 15 (1985): 121–27.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. A. D. Moses, "Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas in the 'Racial Century': Genocides of Indigenous Peoples and the Holocaust," *Patterns of Prejudice* 36, no. 4 (2002): 13.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. S. T. Katz, *The Holocaust and New World Slavery: A Comparative History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).



unequivocal position that the Holocaust was unique—not for theological reasons or due to a mystification of the event and its victims, nor due to his support for Jewish identity after the Holocaust but rather based on his research as a historian and a phenomenologist. Katz disagrees with Bauer but emphasizes that the latter is a secular man who led a movement for secular Judaism, and that he also decisively rejects all mystification and theological meaning like that assigned to the Holocaust by Elie Wiesel. Katz notes that additional scholars have adopted Moses's approach without evaluating it and shows, ironically, that even they cannot avoid expressions such as “exceptionality” and “extremity” in their discussion; they too are unable to escape the uniqueness of the Holocaust.<sup>26</sup>

In remarks made at a conference held by the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities in 2012, Bauer presented a refined summary of the view to which he arrived after years of thought, out of the anxiety that has accompanied his studies and his activity in international organizations and that guides his analysis—the Holocaust, despite its extreme nature, has not prevented subsequent murders; the twentieth century was a bloody century during which many tens of millions of civilians were murdered (it is difficult to estimate exactly how many); and who knows how many will be murdered in the century that follows.<sup>27</sup> First, he spoke about a subject that is close to his heart and that he repeatedly emphasizes: the issue of suffering. It is clear that all survivors of genocide each focus on their own suffering and that a competition of victimhood prevails among them, which he believes constitutes a cover for political interests and attempts to profit from the status of the victim and runs counter to all moral and historical perception. Second, he addressed the question of comparison: suffering, torture, and sadism cannot be ranked, he argued, because no genocide is any better or easier than another. In the event that scholars are trying to identify parallels between genocides, they must also identify the differences between them, which can only be done through comparison. Comparison is particularly essential for Holocaust Studies, as it alone can clarify the extent to which the Holocaust has unique foundations.

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**26** See Katz's response to Moses in *Holocaust and New World Slavery*, 13–17. Katz addresses the arguments of Donald Bloxham and Dan Stone, which appear repeatedly in their writings.

**27** Bauer, “Holocaust and Genocide,” [in Hebrew] remarks delivered at the opening of the symposium on the Holocaust and Genocide (Jerusalem, September 2–4, 2012), published in *Igeret 34* (2012): 34–39. In his lectures, Bauer repeatedly quotes Rudolph J. Rummel, who examined the numbers of those who were killed during the twentieth century. Cf. R. J. Rummel, *Statistics of Democide: Genocide and Mass Murder since 1900* (Charlottesville: Center for National Security Law, School of Law, University of Virginia, 1997).

The question of the unique foundations of the Holocaust led Bauer to examine the factors resulting in genocide and to ask whether there are certain factors or elements that led to or were present in the Holocaust and that have not been found together in other genocides. He enumerates these factors as follows:

1. Totality—the aim of identifying and killing all Jews, down to the last one.
2. Universality—that is on a universal scale, everywhere in the world—first in Europe and then around the globe. Indeed, many peoples, or segments of many peoples, were part of the execution of the Holocaust.
3. The absence of rational motivating factors—there were no practical, economic, military, or political motivations for the murder of the Jews as there were in other cases of genocide. After all, Jewish property was already in German hands prior to the murder, and neither in Germany nor in any other country did the Jews constitute a threat. The main motivating factor was irrational ideology that was detached from reality and from German interests. Even when economic, military, and other considerations ran counter to the ideology, the latter had the upper hand. Here, we can perhaps add to Bauer's assertions that this ideology created—particularly among a fanatical group—a surreal and unfounded picture of the world promoted by a leader for whom the fear of the Jews became an obsession, and who swept up almost all of society, as if he were a messiah striving for redemption by eradicating the Jews.
4. Racial theory—the surreal race theory that brought about the Holocaust required the physical and intellectual eradication of the Jews because they constituted a biological antithesis as well as an antithesis in principle: it was a case of intentional destruction of an entire culture, or of a principle—the principle of equality—and of those who brought to the world democracy, liberalism, and humans' equality before God, all of which run counter to race theory based on inequality. And again we might add: when we speak of genocide we are limiting the actions of the Germans and their collaborators to murder, whereas the Holocaust involved the systematic destruction of an entire culture, as well as intentional harassment, isolation and dispossession, discrimination, and abuse that eased the subsequent murder.
5. Industrialized murder in the heart of Europe—the Holocaust involved planned murder not perpetrated in an outburst of fury but rather in a level-headed manner with special attention to detail, in offices and through bureaucracy, and systematically, using a system that had never been tried on such a scale.
6. A point that Bauer has referred to on other occasions—the nature of the victim, and the civilization the Jews created throughout the generations, are what caused the uniquely obsessive approach toward them and their percep-

tion as the polar opposite of everything the Nazis stood for. This, it should be added, is perhaps the greatest compliment the Jewish People could ask for.

In Bauer's view, each of the six components he presents together in order to oppose the notion of uniqueness also appear separately in the murder of other peoples, such that none are unique to the Holocaust. As a result, the Holocaust is not unique in terms of its components but rather "unprecedented," as he has characterized it in recent decades, in that it involved all the components together. The Holocaust, therefore, is the most extreme genocide—"the complete embodiment of the meaning of the concept of genocide," to use the words of Schweid. Bauer explains with candor that he examines these components from the Jewish perspective. "Viewing the Holocaust from the perspective of the Jewish victim is the main thing, and ... doing so does not undermine in-depth exploration of the perpetrators of the crimes," he maintains. "indeed, I am in favor of a Judeo-centric view of the Holocaust," which is the title of one of his articles. At the same time, however, he again argues that this view does not necessitate the Holocaust's classification as unique but rather as unprecedented.<sup>28</sup>

In a discussion that developed following Bauer's lecture, the respondents debated questions regarding the Holocaust's uniqueness and unprecedented nature. Dan Michman of Bar Ilan University and head of Yad Vashem's International Institute for the Study of the Holocaust, highlighted the path that led from the term unique to the term unprecedented and the fact that the Holocaust was much broader than simply murder; it was the destruction of an entire culture through severe all-encompassing measures, not murder alone, and therefore cannot be defined merely as genocide. Moreover, due to its scope and its depth, it cannot serve as a paradigm for other genocides, because it does not enable us to understand their variation. Next, Jürgen Zimmerer, a Hamburg University historian, asked how one exceptional case can be a scale for other cases; after all, long-standing multifaceted antisemitism is the core of the Holocaust, and no other genocides have been characterized by a comparable component. It is therefore necessary to take into account the uniqueness and singularity of antisemitism, and to understand that we can learn from the Holocaust without detracting from its specificity.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See Dalia Ofer's and my interview with Bauer, "An Interview with Prof. Yehuda Bauer," *Moreshet: Journal for the Study of the Holocaust and Antisemitism* 17 (2020): 15–35.

<sup>29</sup> Michman's and Zimmerer's remarks were not published but can be found in the video footage of the academic conference that was uploaded to YouTube, video, 1:52:01, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6\\_g1ngmYFig](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6_g1ngmYFig).

The limited framework of this article precludes us from expanding our discussion into one on the general debate between the two views, as the writing on the subject, which continues today, is broad and rich, and scholars and philosophers have articulated views in both directions. For example, Raul Hilberg, Léon Poliakov, Elie Wiesel, Emil Fackenheim, Eberhard Jäckel, and Richard Rubenstein, each from his own perspective, all articulated the view that the Holocaust is unique,<sup>30</sup> and a younger generation has continued their arguments. For example, in their article entitled “The Uniqueness of the Holocaust,” Avishai Margalit and Gabriel Motzkin, two Hebrew University philosophers, present the event’s uniqueness as a human experience of a unique quality, based on the unique manner in which the Nazis linked humiliation and murder.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, there has been no lack of scholars who objected to the notion of uniqueness and debated its advocates; Irving L. Horowitz, a Jewish-American sociologist, for example, attacked the eight arguments listed by Emil Fackenheim, the Jewish-American theologian, for the uniqueness of the Holocaust,<sup>32</sup> on the grounds that they are the product of theological thinking; and Wiesel’s words on the world of the concentration camps that is located outside, if not beyond, history,<sup>33</sup> on the grounds that it reflects the mystical trend against which Bauer also spoke. Richard Evans, the Cambridge British historian, defended himself against the charge of Helen Fine, the Jewish-American historian, that he played down the scope of genocides in general and focused only on the Holocaust: the Jewish genocide—it was a debate opposite to what one could expect.<sup>34</sup> In the course of the historians’ debate that took place in Germany in the mid-1980s, German historians also addressed the question of uniqueness, and a few, most notably Ernst Nolte, offered a long list of comparisons of genocides to the Holocaust, thereby expressing opposition to its uniqueness. As noted, these are only a few examples of the extensive literature on the subject.

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**30** See, for example, R. Rubenstein, *The Cunning of History: The Holocaust and the American Future* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).

**31** Cf. A. Margalit and G. Motzkin, “The Uniqueness of the Holocaust,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 25, no. 1 (1996): 65–83.

**32** Cf. Moses, “Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas.”

**33** Cf. E. Wiesel, “Now we Know,” in *Genocide in Paraguay*, ed. R. Arens (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976), 165; I. L. Horowitz, “Genocide and the Reconstruction of Social Theory: Observations on the Exclusivity of Collective Death,” *Armenian Review* 37, no. 1 (1984): 2.

**34** Cf. R. J. Evans, *In Hitler’s Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1989), 38.

## Questions and Suggestions

We now return to the questions with which this article began, and we begin with the possibility that historians and philosophers who were survivors, and who worked in Israel during the era in which the Zionist enterprise was the motivating force behind the work overall, knew that the assertion of the Holocaust's uniqueness served to reinforce the feeling that a unique Jewish society was being built in Israel in its aftermath, and that the world needed to recognize the terrible injustice that had been caused to its brothers and sisters. It is true that historians, like all people, are molds of the landscape of their homelands; however, the fact that a long list of historians and philosophers who were working outside of Israel and were not obligated to the sentiments or the frameworks that emerged there have reached the conclusion that the Holocaust was unique, and have debated those who thought otherwise, indicates that this conclusion has stemmed from the research and the thinking of each scholar, and not necessarily from the needs of their surroundings.

Second, even if relating to the Holocaust as a unique phenomenon was characteristic of many of the philosophers and the historians working in Israel in the initial decades following the Holocaust and the establishment of the state, the tendency to view it as a link in the chain of genocides intensified over time, especially from the 1980s onward, following the genocide that occurred in Cambodia in the 1970s, and in the 1990s, with the mass murders in Rwanda and the Balkan. A look at the debate that occurred in the research community of the 2000s reveals an increase in this tendency, especially in western universities, which are gradually abandoning the notion of the uniqueness of the Holocaust and have come to regard it as an anachronistic idea that confines understanding to a narrow horizon.<sup>35</sup> Debate among historians does not always stem from the heart of the academic research, as many scholars of the phenomenon of genocide are not familiar with the history of the Holocaust and are first introduced to the subject via engagement with varied disciplines and eras, thus the debate has become an outcome of political interests and fashions as well.

Third, on the question of synthesis—as the conclusions reached by a number of scholars reflect—the Holocaust's classification as unique in no way serves to disrespect or detract from the severity of other murders and atrocities or to exclude them from the discussion. On the contrary, deeper exploration of the histories of other genocides and their outcomes, and their comparison to the Holocaust, can result in empathy for the suffering of the other and a move away from

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35 Cf. Moses, "Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas."

the ranking of suffering. Bauer, among others, believes that there is no contradiction between Jewish specificity and universality, as these are two sides of the same coin.<sup>36</sup> We can therefore say that there is no necessary contradiction between the research of the Holocaust as a unique phenomenon and the research of other murders, but rather completion and cross-fertilization, or synthesis, as suggested by the title of Gutman's article, "The Uniqueness and Universal Nature of the Holocaust." Another title in this spirit was formulated by Michael Berenbaum, former director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, for his article "The Uniqueness and Universality of the Holocaust," and Dan Stone, the Royal Holloway British historian, has stressed that, even if he does not agree with them, a new generation of scholars is no longer taking part in the debate but rather pointing out the possibility of synthesis.<sup>37</sup>

Depicting the Holocaust as a unique event does not necessarily encompass a view of the event on a religious, ethical, metaphysical, or mystical level, as Moses maintains, but rather is the outcome of its examination as a historical event, which, like all historical events, has its own characteristics. It also does not necessarily stem from a Jewish and Israeli feeling that the Jewish people and its history are unique but rather from the feeling, from the emotional realm, and the recognition, from the realm of logical analysis, that the Holocaust was such an exceptional event that it can be viewed as unique, regardless of the general Jewish self-perception. Jews during the Holocaust felt that the events occurring around them had never occurred before—that they were living on borrowed time in a world that had been turned upside down in a manner that could not be understood. "This period," wrote Chaim Kaplan, a teacher in the Warsaw Ghetto, "so full of darkness and catastrophe ... is unparalleled since we became a people,"<sup>38</sup> to cite one of many such examples. It was darkness for humanity as a whole, not just for the Jewish People. The same was true of Jews following the Holocaust:

Members of this generation [following the Holocaust] do not allow themselves the perspective of distance, as they tend to regard the continued involvement from within as an absolute moral obligation resting on their shoulders ... It was a consensus that was perceived as virtually self-evident by Jewish scholars of the Holocaust. It reflected the feeling, of mem-

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**36** Conversation with Bauer when preparing the critique in Porat, "The Jerusalem School."

**37** Cf. M. Berenbaum, ed., *A Mosaic of Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis* (New York: New York University Press, 1990); D. Stone, "The Historiography of Genocide: Beyond 'Uniqueness' and Ethnic Competition," *Journal of Theory and Practice* 8, no. 1 (2004): 127–42. See "the new generation" in the executive summary.

**38** C. Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, trans. and ed. A. I. Katsh (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 64, 88.

bers of the generation of Holocaust survivors, that what occurred went beyond all evil that could be expected from man, even against the backdrop of the Jewish People's history of trouble and calamity.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, recognition of the uniqueness of the fate and the treatment of the Jewish People, whether living in the Land of Israel or not, is accompanied by a heavy feeling and is not self-evident. It also involves a sense of shared fate and the burden of responsibility for this fate. Is the assumption that the Holocaust is not part of this uniqueness but rather an extreme genocide located on the continuum of genocides that occurred before and after it, not an attempt to escape this heavy feeling and to be part of a broader universal framework that is shared by many nations?

Bauer clearly defines his position on this subject and agrees that the attempt to say that the Jews are like all nations encompasses a dimension of escapism:

All these universalizing attempts [regarding the Holocaust] seem to me to be, on the Jewish side, efforts by their authors to escape their Jewishness. They are expressions of a deep-seated insecurity; these people feel more secure when they can say "we are just like all the others." The Holocaust should have proven to them that the Jews were, unfortunately, not like the others. Obviously it did not.<sup>40</sup>

Dan Michman, who belongs to the intermediate generation of Holocaust scholars, between that of Gutman and Bauer on the one hand and the third generation that is active today on the other hand, related to this assumption as follows:

Is the Holocaust one case of genocide and nothing more? I reject this assertion ... The Holocaust is not the "genocide of the Jews." Defining it as such ignores and fails to understand the largely anti-Jewish activities that occurred in the era of the Third Reich, including what they referred to as de-Judaization ... But also during the period of the murder itself—the genocide—there are features that are absent from all other cases of genocide ... because there was uniqueness in the Holocaust ... Characterization of the Holocaust as "unique" has come under attack in recent years by various researchers, but I am not afraid of it.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Schweid, *Battle until Dawn*, 143, 267.

<sup>40</sup> Y. Bauer, "A Past that Will not Go Away," in *The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed and the Reexamined*, ed. M. Berenbaum and A. J. Peck (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 20.

<sup>41</sup> D. Michman, "Researching and Teaching Holocaust and Genocide in the Context of Conflict and Trauma," lecture delivered at the fifth biennial conference of the International Network of Genocide Scholars, June 29, 2016.

To accentuate his words, he drew attention to a basic aspect that was neglected in the heat of the debate: the dictionary's definition of the adjective "unique," as it appears for example in the Oxford Dictionary, as "the only one of its kind" and "very special or unusual." According to this definition, unique is not an absolute term. Therefore, Michman continues, it does not necessarily mean that it is detached or not comparable but rather that it "possesses extremely exceptional characteristics, and not because it belongs to me and not the other."<sup>42</sup>

Michman also noted the immense interest in the Holocaust that continues to grow: Bauer repeatedly emphasizes that if the Holocaust were unique, there is no reason to research or address it, as uniqueness means singular—that it will not repeat itself, and it can be left behind our wall. However, uniqueness is the reason for the great interest in the Holocaust, which today is tenfold what it was decades ago when scholars laid the foundations for this research in Israel and elsewhere. At the time, we—members of the intermediate generation—were still students of the first. The Holocaust is fascinating and intriguing to explore precisely because it is an exceptional event pertaining to the Jewish People but also one that holds universal human meaning and has implications for all realms of individual and public life: leadership, the sweeping-up of society, ideology and power, people at moments of spiritual elevation and decline, loss and destruction, sophisticated killing mechanisms, and war lasting years and claiming victims on an incomprehensible scale—all of which still lie at the heart of individual and public life today, seventy-five years after the tragedy known as World War II came to an end. As recently formulated by Nigel Pleasants, the Exeter University sociologist, who advocates the uniqueness of the Holocaust: "We are haunted by the Holocaust precisely because there is reason to say it is unique."<sup>43</sup>

Befitting an intermediate generation, Michman seeks the path of synthesis, showing that Yad Vashem's selection of Christopher Browning to write its volume on the evolution and implementation of the Final Solution is indicative of the need for synthesis, which can occur only when the debate is bona fide and not conducted out of political rivalry and not out of an agenda that fuels opposition, against anyone who advocates uniqueness, that at times seems genuinely personal for the scholars from the field of genocide. According to Michman, Browning's book constitutes a bridge between the approach advocating unique-

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> N. Pleasants, "The Question of the Holocaust's Uniqueness: Was it Something More than or Different from Genocide?" *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 33, no. 3 (2016): 297.



ness and the approach tending toward universality, and proves that synthesis is possible.<sup>44</sup>

And to our fourth and last question, regarding the impact of these argumentations on the study of antisemitism. Friedländer wrote about “the absolute character of the anti-Jewish drive” that motivated the Nazis, and Gutman crystalized his affirmation that the uniqueness of the Holocaust stems from the uniqueness of the “total and apocalyptic” nature of Nazi antisemitism and from its ferocious implementation, and the other scholars who agreed with them actually upheld the same idea.<sup>45</sup> The question that arises is therefore, whether the Nazi antisemitism should be researched and dealt with as a separate issue, a phase that stands outside the former and subsequent phases of antisemitism. Taking a look at the two millennia long history of antisemitism, the answer a historian who delved into this history should give, is, I believe, in the negative: Nazi ideology, albeit its unique characteristics, drew upon that long history, and was nourished by the racial and religious elements that created the ugly image of the Jew along centuries, and by the vast literature that had been devoted to the issue. Moreover, that image of the Jew has not vanished following the Holocaust, the opposite is true: the verbal and visual depictions of Jews flourishing in the post-war world until today are as ugly as those that preceded the Holocaust and draw upon elements that were in popular use when it was perpetrated.

There is no contradiction between the uniqueness of Nazi antisemitic ideology and the necessity to research it with same tools we approach any other kind of antisemitism. The phases in the long history of antisemitism follow one another and pile each on top of the former one, and they should all be looked at as parts of this phenomenon as a whole, and should be researched as a whole—understanding it may serve as the basis for ways to combat it.

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. D. Michman, “Comparative Research on the Holocaust in Western Europe: Its Achievements, its Limits and a Plea for a More Integrative Approach,” *Moreshet: Journal for the Study of the Holocaust and Antisemitism* 17 (2020): 286–306.

<sup>45</sup> Friedländer, *Some Aspects*, 37.

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Florette Cohen Abady and Daniel Kaplin

## Caribbean Jewry: A Model of Tolerance or Assimilation?


As an Orthodox Jew growing up in New York City, it was hard to imagine that Jewish life existed anywhere else let alone in a remote region of the world such as the Caribbean. That statement may seem odd today in a world of global technology where we are “all connected,” but during the 1970s it wasn’t that far-fetched. The Holocaust, which wiped out a third of the world’s Jewry, had ended thirty years earlier, Israel was a developing country—hardly the center of Jewish life, and people in Midwestern and certain Pacific Coastal regions of the US had never actually encountered a Jew. Yet in NYC, Yiddish could be heard among many of the non-English languages spoken throughout the city, kosher delis were springing up everywhere, and a very Jewish Ed Koch was elected mayor.


Jewish life outside of the newly developed Jewish State seemed reserved for the million or so Jews living in the corner of the Earth comprising NYC. It’s a wonder, then, that New York was not actually the first established Jewish community in the Western hemisphere. That title actually belongs to a coastal town, known as Paramaribo, in the small South American country Suriname followed by the Caribbean Island of *Curaçao*. What is yet even stranger is that several Caribbean Islands had thriving Jewish communities yet reported no incidents of antisemitism. As a prejudice theorist specializing in antisemitism, it is odd explaining a lack of prejudice, specifically for a people who have been the targets of prejudice wherever they have lived for over two thousand years.

This paper, therefore, has several goals. First, it outlines the history of the Jewish migration to various Caribbean Islands, with a focus on the Haiti, the Netherland Antilles, Cuba, and Suriname. Second, it provides actual accounts of Jewish life in the Caribbean. Third, it highlights the history of antisemitism or lack thereof and the Caribbean Jewish disappearance, and presents theories of tolerance to account for both with future directions of research.

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**Note:** This essay includes research from an earlier publication: F. Cohen Abady, “Where Have All the Caribbean Jews Gone?” in *Antisemitism in North America: New World, Old Hate*, ed. S. K. Baum, N. J. Kressel, F. Cohen Abady, and S. L. Jacobs (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 196–209.

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## The History of the Jews of the Caribbean

The history of Caribbean Jewry is as old as the New World itself. It should come as no surprise that *conversos* from Spain and Portugal set sail for the New World to escape persecution. However, what may not be apparent at first is the unfolding of Caribbean Jewish history and its relationship to antisemitism. Jews sailed to the New World as *conversos* to escape antisemitism and were determined to hold on to their Jewish identities often at great costs. Paradoxically, when the peril ended and Jews were given the opportunity to practice the Jewish religion freely, they chose to relinquish their faith through intermarriage and assimilation, or they emigrated and left the Caribbean altogether. The next segment traces the history of antisemitism in the Caribbean from the Spanish-Portuguese Inquisition through the present day.

The Inquisition was one of the darkest times faced by Diaspora Jews; antisemitism was at its height, second only to the Holocaust. The Edict of Expulsion forced the Jews to wander and settle in faraway lands, often still unsure of their safety to practice Judaism freely. Then their history took an interesting turn. By the nineteenth century, Jews gained religious freedom and acceptance in all realms of society. Antisemitism seemed to magically disappear but so did the Jews. Many chose to emigrate, mostly to the US or various South American countries, while others chose to assimilate, intermarry, and in essence shed their Jewish identities.

### The Inquisition

Contrary to popular belief, the Spanish Inquisition actually began in 1391 when Ferrant Martinez, a friar in Seville, instigated a pogrom against the Jews. The pogrom came to be known as the Massacre of 1391. Eighty-six years later in 1477, another Dominican friar from Seville, Alonso de Hojeda, implored Queen Isabella to deal with Andalusian *conversos* who were secretly practicing Judaism (crypto-Jews). Queen Isabella and Ferdinand II of Aragon pressured Pope Sixtus IV to agree to an Inquisition to rid Spain of crypto-Jews. On November 1, 1478, Pope Sixtus IV agreed publishing *Exigit sinceras devotionis affectus*, the papal bull giving Ferdinand and Isabella the authority to appoint their inquisitors and root out all heretics.

In 1483, Queen Isabella appointed Tomas de Torquemada (inquisitor-general) and two Dominican monks, Miguel de Morillo and Juan de San Martin, to head the Inquisition and set up the tribunals in Spain. The *conversos* in Seville

were the first targeted. Between 1486 and 1492, twenty-five *auto-da-fés* were held in Toledo, in which hundreds of people were either burned at the stake or imprisoned. By the time the Inquisition reached Barcelona in 1492, over 13,000 *conversos* were put on trial, and ultimately that same year the Jews of Spain were expelled. Many fled over the border into Portugal.

In 1531, Pope Leo X extended the Inquisition to Portugal. As with Spain, tribunals were set up in cities throughout the country. The Inquisition continued until the late eighteenth century and spread to Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the New World. Those Jews and *conversos* fleeing from Portugal and Spain to the New World were not safe in colonies such as Goa, Brazil, and Mexico, until the late eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

## Expulsion

The intent of the Spanish Inquisition was to prevent *conversos*/New Christians from practicing Judaism. In order to prevent *conversos* from interacting with Jews (who seduced faithful Christians to stray), the monarchy formally expelled all Jews from Spain. The Edict of Expulsion, also known as Alhambra Decree was issued in January 1492 (and not revoked until 1968).<sup>2</sup> Jews were given approximately four months to either convert to Christianity or leave the country, after which the sentence was death without trial. Any non-Jew caught sheltering or hiding Jews had their belongings and hereditary privileges confiscated.<sup>3</sup>

While historic accounts of those Jews expelled from Spain differ, it is estimated that between 100,000 and 200,000 Jews either emigrated that year or converted.<sup>4</sup> The Jews of Castile emigrated mainly to Portugal only to be expelled in 1497, and some went to North Africa; the Jews of Aragon went to Italy. The Sephardic Spanish Jews travelled to Europe, North Africa, and the New World until settling and establishing communities in cities such as Amsterdam and Antwerp. Those *conversos* who remained in Spanish and Portuguese territories

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1 Cf. H. A. F. Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

2 Cf. R. Eder, "1492 Ban on Jews Is Voided by Spain," *New York Times*, December 17, 1968, <https://nyti.ms/1RThnvN>.

3 Cf. J. H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain 1469–1716* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964).

4 Cf. Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*; M. L. Margolis and A. Marx, *A History of the Jewish People* (New York: Scribner, 1964); J. Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People and Its History* (New York: William and Morrow, 1991).

were the continuously suspected of secretly practicing Judaism and continued to face persecution until the eighteenth century.

Those Jews who sailed to the New World were followed by the friar-inquisitors and were thus in peril in the New World as well. Many New World *conversos* found creative means of survival, acting as brokers, traders, financiers, pilots, cartographers, and makers and users of astronomical tables and nautical instruments used for trade and often piracy against Spain.

There are reports of Jews who actually engaged in piracy to free the American and Island colonies of the Spanish. Jewish pirates include Moses Cohen Henriques, a Dutch privateer who captured a Spanish silver fleet off Havana in 1628; Sinan “the Great Jewish Pirate” allied with the Barbary pirates in the mid-sixteenth century; and Rabbi Samuel Pallache, who in his youth attacked Spanish ships and later founded the Jewish community in Amsterdam.<sup>5</sup> Caribbean Jews were determined to free themselves of the antisemitic yoke that still took hold in the New World through whatever means necessary.

Fear of persecution of the original Jewish communities is apparent in the Spanish-Portuguese synagogues still standing in Suriname and Curaçao today, both of which maintain the sandy floors put down during the Inquisition to muffle the sounds of prayers and allow for Jews to gather in secrecy.

## Settling in the New World 1500 – 1800

### Haiti

Luis de Torres was the first Jew to settle in Haiti in 1492. Like many Jews, he immigrated to escape persecution. He left Spain with Christopher Columbus as his *converso* interpreter. Most Jews, however, immigrated to Haiti after it was conquered by the French in 1633. Their stay was short lived—in 1683, France expelled the Jews from Haiti, leaving only a few high positioned officials of French trading companies. Haitian Jews experienced little peace in Haiti during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, culminating with the 1804 slave revolt of Toussaint L’Ouverture, which resulted once again in the death or expulsion of the Jews. Nevertheless, Jews continued to settle in Haiti as an escape from persecution and civil strife in Europe.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. E. Kritzler, *Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean: How a Generation of Swashbuckling Jews Carved Out an Empire in the New World in Their Quest for Treasure, Religious Freedom—and Revenge* (New York: Anchor Books, 2008).

As a French Colony, public schools in Haiti were reserved for Catholics causing Jews to once again hide their religious identities in order to attend schools. Most Jews settled in port cities, making their livings as tradespeople. Archaeological evidence supports the existence of ancient Jewish communities in Jérémie, Cap Haitien, and Jacmel.

## The Netherlands Antilles (Curaçao, St. Maarten, and Bonaire)

Archaeological evidence indicates that Jews arrived to the island of St. Maarten during the Spanish Inquisition, and a Jewish community existed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Recently the ruins of an abandoned synagogue (c. 1781) were discovered along with the remains of a historic Jewish cemetery.

The Jews of Curaçao differed from those of St. Maarten and other Caribbean communities. Curaçao, sometimes referred to as the “Mother of Jewish communities in the New World,” was home to the wealthiest Caribbean Jewish community.<sup>6</sup> Samuel Cohen was the first Jew to arrive in Curaçao when the Dutch conquered the island from the Spanish in 1634. In 1651, twelve Jewish families arrived from Amsterdam and established Congregation *Mikvé Israel*. The Jewish community settled on Plantation *De Hoop* (*The Hope*). In 1659, a second group of Jewish settlers arrived with the first Torah scroll (still used today in the *Mikvé Israel-Emanuel* Synagogue). By 1660, the Jews concentrated in Willemstad, and in 1674 they constructed the first of four synagogues in Willemstad. This synagogue was replaced in 1703 with a much larger one, the *Snoa* synagogue, which was then replaced by the magnificent Temple Emanuel. The now unified *Mikvé Israel-Emanuel* Synagogue congregation uses the *Snoa*.<sup>7</sup> Most of the Jews in Curaçao were of Sephardic descent, and by 1732, Congregation *Mikvé Israel* became the center of Jewish religious life.

The Jewish population in Curaçao became very influential. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Jews constituted more than half of the white population in Curaçao. They fought alongside Simon Bolivar in Venezuela and Colombia’s fight for independence against Spain. They were prominent businessmen excelling in international trade, shipping and maritime insurance, and transportation.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. M. Arbell, *The Jewish Nation of the Caribbean: The Spanish-Portuguese Jewish Settlements in the Caribbean and the Guianas* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2002), 23.

<sup>7</sup> I. S. Emmanuel and S. Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1970).



Many of these Jewish firms and commercial shops continue still exist on the island today.

## Cuba

According to some reports the first Jews (*marranos*) arrived in Cuba with Christopher Columbus: Luis de Torres (Santa Maria), Juan de Cabrera (La Pinta), and Rodrigo de Triana (La Nina).<sup>8</sup> Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Jews immigrated to Cuba from Brazil. However, under Spanish rule they were harassed, and many assimilated into Cuban society.<sup>9</sup>

## Suriname: The Oldest Jewish Community in the Western Hemisphere

Suriname (also referred to as Republic of Suriname) is a country in northern South America, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the north. Although it is not an island, it is a member of *CARICOM* (the Caribbean Community) and is considered a Caribbean country. Suriname has a population of approximately 560,000, many of which reside in the northern capital of Paramaribo. Many of the first Jews to settle Suriname were of Spanish and Portuguese descent that fled to Holland and the Dutch colonies to escape persecution. Many immigrated to Brazil for a small fee and became merchants or sugarcane growers, but when the Portuguese recaptured Brazil from Holland, many of the Jews fled Brazil to settle in other Dutch colonies.<sup>10</sup>

The first Dutch Jews arrived in Suriname as early as 1639, with a second group of Jewish settlers arriving from England in 1652 with the help of Lord Willoughby of Parham. The third group of Jewish settlers arrived with Joseph Nuñez de Fonseca (David Nassi) from Dutch Brazil. After the Portuguese defeat in 1654, they settled in Suriname in 1666. Most established sugarcane plantations in Torarica, the capital of Suriname, and later in Cassipora and Jodensavanne along the Suriname River. The Portuguese Jewish Congregation of Suriname was founded in 1662. The first synagogue *Kahal Kadosh (Holy Congregation): Beracha Ve Shalom (Blessing and Peace)* was built in 1667 and the Jewish Court of

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Margolis and Marx, *A History of the Jewish People*.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. J. R. Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Sourcebook 315–1791* (New York: Hebrew Union College Press, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. C. Potok, *Wanderings* (New York: Knopf, 1978).

Civil Justice (*The Mahamad*) was established in 1785 and gave the court assembly (*Senhores do Mahamad*) the right to act in all matters of civil justice.<sup>11</sup>

By 1667 the Jews of Suriname were granted full religious and economic freedoms by the Dutch government. The Jews of Suriname prospered. By 1730 they owned 115 of 400 plantations in Suriname. Then in 1767, Jewish business practices were questioned by the local government and general population causing an economic downturn. By 1791 Jewish plantation ownership declined to only 46 of 600 plantations. Additionally, internal strife caused a rift between the Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities leading to a division of congregations. The *Neve Shalom (Oasis of Peace)* synagogue built in 1719 in Paramaribo became the Ashkenazi synagogue in 1735, and the Portuguese Sephardic community built their own synagogue in Paramaribo called *Sedek Ve Shalom (Justice and Peace)*.<sup>12</sup>

## Acculturation: 1800 – 1950

### Haiti

The largest Jewish migration to Haiti occurred between the late 1800s and early 1900s from predominantly Arab lands in the Middle East, when antisemitic incidents were on the rise. Prior to this era, there was little antisemitism in Arab lands. Jews, living in the Muslim world, were given dhimmi status or a second-class citizenship, which was restrictive in nature but for the most part afforded a peaceful life. As “People of the Book,” they received relative security against persecution. The Damascus affair in 1840 led to a rise in antisemitic incidents throughout the Middle East.<sup>13</sup> A French law giving French citizenship to minorities in French-controlled North Africa and the Middle East allowed many Jews from Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt to move to Haiti. Thirty Jewish families arrived during this period bringing with them their Sephardic customs and traditions.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. C. C. Goslinga, *A Short History of the Netherlands Antilles and Surinam* (New York: Springer, 1979).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> The Damascus affair began on February 5, 1840, when Franciscan Capuchin friar Father Thomas and his Greek servant were reported missing. The local authorities believed that Jews had killed them to use their blood in the making of Passover Matzos. Solomon Negrin, a Jew, was arrested, tortured, and forced to confess along with several other Jews. The incident was followed by violent attacks on Jewish communities throughout the Middle East. Cf. B. Lewis, *From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004).

When the United States occupied Haiti between 1915 and 1934, many Jews took the opportunity to move to the United States. Before the start of World War II, the Haitian government issued passports and visas to Eastern European Jews escaping Nazi-occupied Europe.<sup>14</sup>

## Curaçao

In 1864, the Reform Jewish Movement built Temple *Emanuel*. Today the merged congregations comprise *Mikvé Israel-Emanuel*, referred to as the oldest synagogue in the Western hemisphere housing the Jewish Historical Cultural Museum. The synagogue contains 18 Torah scrolls over 300 years old—dating back to the Spanish Inquisition in the late 1400s. The synagogue’s remarkable architecture, solid mahogany interior, eighteenth-century copper chandeliers, and sand-covered floor have remain a monuments and the number one tourist attraction in Curaçao.<sup>15</sup> United Congregation *Mikvé Israel-Emanuel* continues to be the oldest active Jewish congregation in the Americas. World War II produced a Jewish war hero. George Maduro fought during the war in the Netherlands and later joined the resistance. In 1945 he was captured by the Germans and later died in Dachau.

## Cuba

Jewish immigration to Cuba increased in the late 1800s, after Jose Marti liberated Cuba from Spain in 1898. In 1904 following the Spanish–American War, a group of American Jewish war veterans immigrated to Cuba and founded a congregation in Havana. American Ashkenazi Jews immigrated to Cuba to work for US-owned plantations and businesses, and in 1906 the United Hebrew Congregation was founded.

The period from 1910 until 1920 saw a large influx of Jews from Turkey and Eastern Europe looking to settle in the United States but was denied due to the “quota system” immigration policy. Due to the lack of antisemitism in Cuba, some of the new Jewish immigrants stayed and fared well, mostly in Cuba’s growing garment industry. Two synagogues were erected in Camaguey, *Shevet*

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14 Cf. R. Batti, “One More Step toward ‘Never Again’,” *The Almanac* 47, March 14, 2012, <https://haitiholocaustsurvivors.wordpress.com/published-articles/one-more-step-toward-never-again/>.

15 Cf. Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*.

*Ajim* and *Tiferet Israel*. A Jewish community was founded in Santiago in 1924, called the Jewish Society of Eastern Cuba. The society was housed in a rented space until 1939, when it finally moved into a new building, which became the Synagogue of Santiago de Cuba. By 1924, there were 24,000 Jews (commonly referred to as “Polacos”<sup>16</sup>) living in Cuba, and in the 1930s, the Central Jewish Committee was formed. Seventy-five percent of Cuba’s Jewish population lived in Havana. Havana hosted five synagogues, a kosher restaurant, one Jewish high school, and five Jewish elementary schools. Limited Jewish immigration continued throughout World War II (with the S.S. Saint Louis being denied access).<sup>17</sup>

## Suriname

In the 1800s the economy began to decline, and the Jewish population began to dwindle. Pirate raids, sugar devaluation, depletion of agricultural soil, and the end of the slave trade all took their toll on the economy. Plantation communities disappeared along the coastline, and the remainder of the Jewish community relocated in Paramaribo.

## Tales of Antisemitism: From 1950 to the Present Day

By the 1950s most Jews living in the Caribbean left the islands, most immigrating to the United States for economic opportunities and higher education. Many recounted their stories of life on the islands with fondness and gratitude for the hospitality provided by their host countries.

### Haiti: Eli Abady, Gilbert Bigio, and Bill Mohr of Haiti

By the late 1950s, most of the Haitian Jewry left for economic opportunities and Jewish marriage partners. Today, only a handful of Jews remain mostly in Port-au-Prince.

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<sup>16</sup> The Cubans referred to all immigrant Jews and non-Jews without an English accent as “polaks.”

<sup>17</sup> Cf. G. Thomas and M. Morgan-Witts, *Voyage of the Damned* (New York: Stein & Day, 1974).

The Abadys arrived in Haiti from Aleppo, Syria via Cairo, Egypt, circa 1900 and established a textile business in Port-au-Prince. Though there was no official Jewish sector, these Sephardic Jews tended to settle in the neighborhoods surrounding the capital city of Port-au-Prince. Unlike the Jewish communities of Curaçao and Suriname, the Jews of Haiti had no synagogue, no rabbi, no schools, and no community center of their own. On Jewish holidays, prayer services and meals were celebrated in home gatherings. Since there was no rabbi or center of Jewish life on the island, even the Jewish ritual of circumcision had to wait until a mohel (a doctor or rabbi who performs a Jewish circumcision) was brought in from the United States. Sometimes the ritual, which is traditionally performed on boys at eight days old, waited for years.

Eli Abady explained that he did not receive a Bris until the age of two “because there was no mohel living on the island.” Nonetheless, he and his brother Clement and four sisters Fortune, Rene, Alice, and Esther led a happy childhood. They attended the neighborhood Catholic schools without experiencing any antisemitism whatsoever. When asked about it Eli replied, “There was no antisemitism in Haiti. Everyone was always very accepting and kind to us. They never made us feel different.” Although the Jewish community was scattered around the island, he always felt a sense of community. When asked how they were able to get together without living in the same area, the reply was matter-of-fact, “Haiti is very small. It didn’t take long to get to anyone’s home.”

By the 1950s, many Jews left Haiti for the United States. Eli like many of the young people of his generation immigrated to the US in the early 1960s in pursuit of economic and matrimonial prospects. In the years that followed, Eli arranged for visas for his family to immigrate to the United States.

Of the prominent Sephardic families residing in Haiti—the Bigios, Chrems, Silveras, Ashkenazies, Danas, and Shaloms, only Gilbert Bigio remains. Bigio has been the unofficial leader of the Sephardic community in Haiti and continues to hold yearly Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services in his house. Bigio owns the only Torah in all of Haiti, which is necessary for Sabbath and High Holiday services. Additionally, as one of the few Jews remaining in Haiti and a prominent businessman, he serves as the honorary consul for Israel in Haiti.<sup>18</sup> When asked if he’s ever experienced antisemitism in Haiti, Bigio laughed. “On the contrary, the Haitians have a lot of respect for the Jews, and a lot of admiration for

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. P. Woodward, “Does Haiti Billionaire, Gilbert Bigio, Make Israel Look Good?” *Ezili Danto*, January 25, 2010, <http://www.ezilidanto.com/zili/2011/03/haitis-billionaire-industrialist-gilbert-bigio/>.

Israel,” he said, pointing out that Haiti voted for the United Nations partition of Palestine in 1947, which created Israel.<sup>19</sup>

Sephardic Jews however, comprised only a portion of Haitian Jewry. In 1937, the Haitian government issued passports to European Jews escaping the Holocaust. Bill and Harriet Mohr founders of *Haiti Holocaust Survivors (Almanac*, March 14, 2012) described Haiti as a comfort and “healing place to be,” where they were welcomed and cared for.<sup>20</sup> It was a safe haven for Jews, some of whom stayed through the 1950s and some of whom used it as a transit stop until they could gain entrance into the United States. For those who left and built homes in the United States, Haiti saved their lives and the Haiti Jewish Refugee Legacy Project was designed by the Mohrs to inform the world and honor those Haitians who saved Jewish lives during the Holocaust.

## Curaçao

Although Jewish firms and commercial shops continue to be forerunners in the island’s economy, the number of Jews residing in Curaçao has diminished over the years. Today fewer than 350 Jews remain on the island, out of a total population of 125,000. On many of the islands, Jews usually leave to attend universities in the United States and marry within the Jewish faith.

Victor Abady, a prominent business owner in Curaçao arrived from Aleppo, Syria in the early 1900s and established textile and retail businesses. Though it is rare, he and his family keep a kosher home, built a ritual mikveh, and employed a rabbi to run a Jewish day school in the heart of this colorful island. The Curaçao Community Hebrew School (for children ages five through twelve) is run out of Congregation *Sharei Tsedek*. The local supermarket carried a full line of kosher groceries imported from Israel, the United States, and Europe. When asked about antisemitism on the island the answer was the same for each member of the Abady family, “what antisemitism?”

Though Victor’s son Aaron Abady eventually left Curaçao for the United States, he unequivocally said that antisemitism never factored into his decision. Like many Jews before him, leaving the Caribbean was based on religion and matrimonial prospects for his children. Nonetheless, Aaron’s home in Curaçao

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<sup>19</sup> L. Luxner, “Haiti’s Few Jews Hold on to History,” *Miami Herald*, March 21, 2004, <http://faculty.webster.edu/corbette/haiti/miscopic/ethnic/jewshistory2.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> “The Haiti Holocaust Project Seeks Information,” *Repeating Islands: News and Commentary on Caribbean Culture, Literature, and the Arts*, issued July 18, 2010, accessed July 7, 2020, <http://repeatingislands.com/2010/07/18/the-haiti-holocaust-project-seeks-information/>.

and his father's business remains. The Jewish community in Curaçao still maintains one of the most historic synagogues in the world. United Congregation *Mikvé Israel-Emanuel* in Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles, is the oldest active Jewish congregation in the Americas (founded in 1651), and continues to follow the Sephardic traditions. The Curaçao Community Hebrew School is now run in conjunction with Congregation *Sharei Tsedek*, a conservative Ashkenazi community, and Jewish cemeteries such as *Beth Haim* may still be visited on the island with tombstones dating back to the 1600s.

## St. Maarten

The Jews currently living on St. Maarten are recent immigrants from other Dutch Islands, the United States, and Israel who came for vacation or business and remained. Less than ten years ago, the Jewish community of St. Maarten opened its first synagogue since the eighteenth century. The synagogue and new Chabad Center operated by Rabbi Moishe and Sara Chanowitz officially opened its doors on January 3, 2011. Once a church, the 1,200-square-foot space sits in the Simpson Bay Yacht Club over Zee Best, a French pastry shop on the Dutch side of the island. The synagogue serves 300 Jewish permanent island residents and over 1,000 visitors during the tourist season. Little is known about the Jews who first came to the island as refugees from the Spanish Inquisition except that there was a sixteenth- and seventeenth-century community that was abandoned late in the seventeenth century.

An interview with Rabbi Moishe of the Chabad house of St. Maarten revealed that antisemitism on St. Maarten was a non-issue. He added that the locals show the Jewish community on the island tremendous respect and admiration, and everyone gets along and coexists without fear. Le Grand Marche Supermarkets has made kosher food (which is imported from the US, Israel, and France) available on the island and Jewish children are home schooled and receive both a Jewish and secular education.

## Cuba

By 1952, only 12,000 Jews remained in Cuba. After the Revolution, 94 percent of Cuba's Jewish population fled. Those who remained were assimilated into Cuban society. Members of the Caribbean Jewry maintain that antisemitism is not experienced in any Caribbean island. Cuban Jews are no different. Interviews with Cuban Jews confirm that common antisemitism was non-existent. However, oth-

ers such as Professor Irving Horowitz maintain that anti-Israeli attitudes and anti-Zionism, specifically that of the Castro regime, falls nothing short of antisemitism.<sup>21</sup> Fidel Castro always maintained a respectful attitude toward the Cuban Jewish community. However although he originally supported Israel, that support gradually changed to hostility following the Six-Day War in 1967. Nonetheless, the relationship between anti-Zionism and antisemitism is a complicated one and will be discussed in subsequent sections; however it is imperative that the debate be heard on both sides before conclusions are drawn.

New Jersey resident Arline Hanfling moved to Cuba when she was one-year old and had only happy memories of her childhood in Havana. “There was no problem at all being Jewish and no antisemitism. I belonged to a very Reform temple.”<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Carol Siegler of Longboat Key in Florida spent most of her childhood in Havana. Born of Lithuanian descent, her family owned and operated a textile factory and a department store in Havana. In 1906, Jews of Ashkenazi descent founded Cuba’s first synagogue, the United Hebrew Congregation. The following decade saw a large migration of more Ashkenazi Jews as well as Sephardic Jews from Turkey. The Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe used Cuba as a stopover en route to the United States, but due to the lack of antisemitism remained in Cuba and prospered. Their reasons for remaining are noteworthy. Coming from Europe’s hotbed of antisemitism, the lack of prejudice must have come as a welcome surprise to the newly arrived “Polacos.”

The Synagogue of Santiago de Cuba was founded in 1924, (originally called the Jewish Society of Eastern Cuba) consisting mainly of Sephardic Jews from Turkey. This changed in the late 1930s as Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe migrated to Cuba in escape of the Nazis, at which time a Central Jewish Committee was founded. Cuba was a safe haven for Jews until 1939 when President Bru and the Cuban government refused to permit the S.S. Saint Louis to land in Havana harbor. A case for Cuba’s antisemitic policies often begins with the Saint Louis. Supposedly, Nazi agents within Cuba convinced the general public that the refugees aboard were a threat against Cuba and the safety of its citizens. Authorities reported that the Cuban government charged five hundred dollars per refugee to obtain a visa for Cuba. Additionally, the sugar-based economic collapse of the 1920s led to high unemployment, and the emergence of a nationalist movement barring employment of immigrants and prompting Cuba to accept no

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21 Cf. I. L. Horowitz, “Cuba, Castro and anti-Semitism,” *Current Psychology* 26, no. 3 (2007): 183–90.

22 R. Wiener, “Few Expect Big Changes as Fidel Castro Departs: Island Ruler’s Reign Was Tough on Israel, Less so on the Jews,” *New Jersey Jewish News*, February 28, 2008, <http://www.njewishnews.com/njnn.com/022808/njFewExpectBigChanges.html> [no longer accessible].



newcomers of any kind or nation.<sup>23</sup> After weeks at port the ship's passengers were denied entrance, forcing the Saint Louis to return to Europe and sentencing its passengers to death.

Those Jews able to find refuge in Cuba during the war started businesses and fared well. Jay Levinson, of John Jay College of Criminal Justice and author of *The Jewish Community of Cuba*, insists that Castro and his government opposed antisemitism and that the Jewish community has always been protected, despite their official position supporting the Palestinians against Israeli occupation and aggression. According to Levinson, Castro differentiates Jews from Israel and asserts that although Jews did suffer economically after the Revolution, it was as members of Cuba's middle class, not as Jews specifically.<sup>24</sup> Even in today's Cuba, Jews are free to maintain Jewish traditions and religious rituals. There is availability of kosher products, places of worship, and complete respect for the Jewish community.

Irving Horowitz,<sup>25</sup> Rutgers Professor Emeritus and editor of *Cuban Communism, 1959–2003*,<sup>26</sup> counters the claim that Castro's anti-Zionist record is not in itself antisemitic sentiment but born out of political and diplomatic relationships. He maintains that anti-Zionism is antisemitism and adds that the 90 percent decline of the Cuban Jewish community soon after 1959 supports his argument. At the time of the Revolution in 1959, Cuba's Jewish population peaked at 15,000 people; today it is estimated at 1,200. Additionally, Cuba provided training camps for Palestinian terrorists and published anti-Israel propaganda.

Horowitz's points are valid, yet even after Cuba severed diplomatic relations with Israel in 1973, Jewish life never disappeared. Jews maintain religious services in synagogues and attend Jewish Sunday schools. The only recorded antisemitism occurring in Cuba was during the Gulf War when Arab students threw stones at *Adas Israel* Synagogue in Havana. Cuban authorities responded quickly, and no one was hurt. In 1991, the Castro regime eased its atheistic policies allowing citizen participation in religious associations. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) sent religious and community leaders to help rebuild the Cuban Jewish communities of Havana, Santiago, and Camaguey.

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. M. Bejarano, *The Jewish Community of Cuba: Memory and History*, ed. H. Avni (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. J. Levinson, *Jewish Community of Cuba: The Golden Years, 1906–1958* (Boulder: Westview, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> Dr. Horowitz passed away while this paper was being written.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. I. L. Horowitz and J. Suchlicki, *Cuban Communism, 1959–2003*, 9th ed. (Piscataway: Transaction, 1998).

B'nai B'rith and a Hadassah women's chapter also provide medicine and other forms of aid to Cuba's Jewish community.

Stuart Cooper of New Jersey and past president of the B'nai B'rith Tri-State Region participates in the Cuban Jewish Relief Project. The United States government allows B'nai B'rith members to travel to Cuba, to supply religious articles and medicine to the Jewish community as well local Cuban hospitals. Despite the dwindling number of Jews in Cuba, Cooper maintains that the Castro regime has never singled out the Jews. Today restrictions on organized religion have eased and Cooper points out that “[the government] allowed people to worship openly without any repercussions, even those who were members of the Communist Party. There is no discrimination permitted in Cuba of any sort.” In 1994, the Jewish Agency provided a \$150 exit fee to over 400 Cuban Jews allowing them to immigrate to Israel, in what is now referred to as Operation Cigar.

## Suriname

During World War II, a few Jewish refugees from Europe settled in Suriname. By 1975 after its independence from Holland, Suriname's Jewish population saw a steep decline, which only deepened after civil war broke out in the late 1980s. The current Jewish community consists of only 300 people. In the late 1990s, the Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jewish synagogues in Paramaribo merged and services are actively held in the *Neve Shalom* Synagogue in downtown Paramaribo (*Zedek v' Shalom* is currently rented). Today's Jewish community of Suriname is poor and is currently being upkept by an initiative called Chai Membership. Jacob Steinberg is director of the initiative, which collects donations from members outside of Suriname who wish to donate money to maintain the synagogues, cemeteries, mikvah, and their surrounding grounds.<sup>27</sup>

Through email correspondence, he explained that the entire structure from the *Aron Kodesh* (holy ark), *Bimah* (dais), the benches, to the beautiful Torahs, are all supported through outside membership and donations. Like the synagogue in Curaçao, the *Neve Shalom Synagogue* boasts a sandy floor as a reminder of the forty years spent in the desert after leaving Egypt, and as a continuation of the *marranos* secret synagogues during the Inquisition when practicing Judaism was a capital crime. The floor had been covered with sand to quiet the sounds of their prayers.

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27 Cf. “Welcome to the Suriname Jewish Community!” Suriname Jewish Community, issued 2009, accessed April 12, 2013, <http://www.suriname-jewish-community.com/>.

“There is no antisemitism to speak of in Suriname,” he responded when asked. The *Neve Shalom* Synagogue is open to tourists and community members. It is cared for by a *shamash* (which is the Hebrew word for caretaker) and contains a museum and library. The synagogue grounds also house a community center, the former house of the rabbi, and the first Sephardic cemetery. Since the community no longer has a local rabbi, the former rabbi’s apartment has been renovated and is now rented by guests and tourists. Israel has an honorary consul in Paramaribo.

## What Happened to Caribbean Jewry?

What were once vibrant Jewish communities have disintegrated into a handful of Jews. What happened to these communities? Where have all of these Jews gone? Were antisemitic incidents on the various Caribbean Islands grounds for emigration? The remainder of the paper recounts the history of antisemitism from the first arrival of Jews to the Caribbean through the present day, and proposes theoretical explanations for that history with a specific emphasis on the various theories of tolerance. The paper concludes with directions for future research based on the Caribbean model of tolerance.

### From Immigration to Emigration and Assimilation: The Quiet Disappearance of Caribbean Jewry

As history has shown, immigration to the Caribbean was ignited by antisemitism. While phenomenally its disappearance stemmed from quite the opposite—a complete lack of antisemitism. Jewish migration to the Caribbean began as a result of the Jewish expulsion decree from Spanish-held lands. The expulsion decree was signed on March 31, 1492, and announced on May 1 (including the kingdoms of Castile, Catalonia, Aragon, Galicia, Majorca, Minorca, the Basque provinces, the islands of Sardinia and Sicily, the kingdom of Valencia, and the kingdom of Andalusia). The Jews were given three months to leave and were required to be out of the country by August 1st. Many of Spain’s Jews paid their way into Portugal only to be expelled again in 1497.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. W. H. Prescott, *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella the Catholic*, vol. 11 (Boston: American Stationers, 1837).

The “Holy Office of the Inquisition” in Portugal forced the conversion of the Jews who remained to Catholicism where they then lived as “New Christians.” The New Christians of Portugal were not persecuted in the same manner as the *conversos* of Spain, as such the exodus of the Jews from Portugal was unlike the massive one from Spain. The Jewish exodus from Portugal lasted from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth, mostly to Western Europe where the *conversos* returned to Judaism.<sup>29</sup>

During the seventeenth century, Protestant European countries (with the exception of France) began colonizing the Caribbean Islands. These powers allowed Jews to reconvert from Catholicism to Judaism without persecution, making these colonies a viable option for their settlement. In turn the colonizing powers welcomed the Jews’ expertise in trading, shipping, and banking, as well as their knowledge of Spanish and Portuguese. When Portugal reoccupied the Dutch-held parts of Brazil, in 1654, the Jews left those settlements and reestablished themselves among the main producers of sugar on islands throughout the Caribbean.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Jews were permitted to settle in Spanish-speaking countries. After living for several generations as *conversos* and New Christians, the Spanish-Portuguese Jews in the Caribbean returned to Judaism. They were welcomed, given equal rights and citizenship, and were well respected. The Jews worked to preserve their Spanish language, culture, and traditions. However, the widespread social acceptance of the Sephardic Jews was more detrimental to its preservation than it was beneficial—leading to intermarriage and assimilation. Although the Caribbean Sephardim took pride in their Jewish ancestry and were free to worship, work, and live every aspect of life as they chose, they were losing their Judaism.

In part the decline of Jewish practices during that period had to do with the lack of religious leaders, institutions, and structured communities. Since Judaism in the Spanish-Portuguese colonies had previously been practiced in secret, many Caribbean Jews needed to build religious institutions from scratch and import rabbis and religious leaders from Europe. Many of these rabbis insisted upon strict Orthodox observance, which was already far removed from the Caribbean way of life. The tropical climate and the distances of the Jews from the synagogue made it all but impossible to observe the Sabbath, kosher and dietary laws, and abide by the restrictive modest dress code imposed by Orthodox Jewry. This created resistance toward anything deemed Jewish among the newer gener-

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29 Cf. O. R. Constable, *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

ations, thus alienating them from communal life altogether. Each subsequent generation saw more assimilation and intermarriage.<sup>30</sup>

Unlike the Jews who settled in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies and remained Jews in secret, the Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal who had fled to Amsterdam and then settled in the Dutch, Danish Virgin Islands, French and British Caribbean Islands were never forced to hide their identities and established active Jewish communities. Synagogues were established soon after their arrival, and by the end of the eighteenth century there were over 1,500 Jews on the island of Curaçao alone. Yet only a handful of these families are Jewish today, most are devout Catholics who acknowledge that their ancestors were Dutch Jews.<sup>31</sup>

Another contributing factor to the decline of Caribbean Jewry was the introduction of the Reform movement, which established its own arrangement of prayers and brought its own religious leaders to the islands. English texts replaced Spanish hymns and Sephardic melodies. The synagogue as a cohesive community and family center began to lose meaning.<sup>32</sup> In Curaçao specifically, a rift developed in the congregation in 1815 over the new cantor from Amsterdam. The division of the synagogue caused the Sephardic community to spread among the islands and eventually to marry non-Jews.<sup>33</sup>

The arrival of Ashkenazi and Middle Eastern Jews raised several issues. First, their arrival pushed the Spanish-Portuguese Jews to further assimilate. The Spanish-Portuguese Jews were among the elite of Caribbean society. They worked as bankers, ship owners, professors, generals, and politicians and did not want to associate with the newcomers.<sup>34</sup> Many chose instead to leave the islands or assimilate with non-Jews of their own class and social standing.<sup>35</sup>

Second many of the newcomers, especially with the advent of Nazism and the Holocaust, immigrated to the Caribbean with the intent to continue on to the United States.<sup>36</sup> Most had no intention of establishing communities or maintaining ties. The Jewish refugees were provided a safe haven until they were able

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30 Cf. Arbell, *The Jewish Nation of the Caribbean*.

31 Cf. J. C. Goldish, *Once Jews: Stories of Caribbean Sephardim* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2009).

32 Cf. Arbell, *The Jewish Nation of the Caribbean*.

33 Cf. Goldish, *Once Jews*.

34 Cf. Arbell, *The Jewish Nation of the Caribbean*.

35 Cf. Goldish, *Once Jews*.

36 Cf. J. Newman, *Nearly the New World: The British West Indies and the Flight from Nazism 1933–1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019).

to obtain visas to the US. Those who did remain soon faced the same challenges as their predecessors, making it difficult to maintain a Jewish way of life.<sup>37</sup>

Economically, it was no longer feasible to remain on the islands. Firstly, the Caribbean was replaced by Africa and Southeast Asia as a center for the production of sugar, vanilla, cocoa, and other tropical products. Secondly, transatlantic ships no longer needed coal stations. Jewish trading and shipping companies in the region declined and eventually relocated to the United States. This economic situation prompted younger generations to look forward to the higher education and training that American universities offered.<sup>38</sup>

## Explaining the Lack of Antisemitism in the Modern Caribbean: The Psychology of Tolerance

It would seem that the claim “The moon is the only place, where one can be free from antisemitism”<sup>39</sup> is wrong—there seems to be no report of classic antisemitism in the Caribbean for over two-hundred years. Here, classic antisemitism is specified because of the anti-Israeli and anti-Zionist attitudes expressed in Cuba after the revolution. However, with the exception of Cuba, there have been no expressions of modern antisemitism or anti-Israeli attitudes either. One could argue that there are no reports of antisemitism because the Jews have all but disappeared. This would be a valid argument except for the fact that historically antisemitism has and continues to exist in societies without Jews.<sup>40</sup> An alternate and more probable argument would be that the Caribbean is a conglomerate of islands and a multi-cultural society that favors tolerance and acceptance of all regardless of race or religion. In the words of Ralph R. Premdas:

[The Caribbean may be viewed] as an area populated by a diverse polyglot of peoples. There are whites, blacks, browns, yellows, reds, and an assortment of shades in between. There are Europeans, Africans, Asian Indians, Indonesian Javanese, Chinese, Aboriginal Indians, and many mixes. There are Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Rastafarians, Santería, Winti,

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37 Cf. Arbell, *The Jewish Nation of the Caribbean*.

38 Cf. *ibid.*

39 H. Arendt, “Ceterum Censeo,” in *Vor Antisemitismus ist man nur noch auf dem Mond sicher* (Munich: Piper, 2000), originally published in *Der Aufbau*, December 26, 1941). Translation by the authors of this article.

40 Cf. “Anti-Semitism Rising Even in Countries with No Jews at All, Secretary-General Tells Event on Power of Education to Counter Racism, Discrimination,” United Nations, issued September 26, 2018, accessed July 7, 2020, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sgsm19252.doc.htm>.

Vudun, etc. They speak in a multitude of tongues—Spanish, English, Dutch, French, English, and a diverse number of Creoles such as papiamentu, sranan tongo, ndjuka, saramaccan, kromanti, kreyol, as well as Hindustani, Bhojpuri, Urdu, etc. In whatever combinations of race, religion, language, and culture they cohere and coexist.<sup>41</sup>

From social psychological research, several theories exist that may help explain the extraordinary lack of prejudice experience in the Caribbean: integrated threat theory and the contact hypothesis, the multiculturalism hypothesis, and terror management theory.

Research on political tolerance has consistently found a negative association with perceived threat.<sup>42</sup> In other words, the greater the cultural threat, the lower the tolerance. Integrated threat theory posits that both realistic threats and symbolic threats to one's social group dissuade tolerance.<sup>43</sup> Realistic threats are both economic (epitomized by perceived competition over material and economic group interests) and physical in nature (safety concerns). Symbolic threats are often cultural and focus on group differences in values, norms, and beliefs. Studies have found that in contrast to the US, race, for example, is not a defining factor in the Caribbean despite the shared history of colonialism and slavery.<sup>44</sup> Out-groups with their different worldview threaten the cultural identity of the in-group and their way of life, thus leading to more negative attitudes and less tolerance toward these groups.<sup>45</sup>

A meta-analysis of over 200 empirical studies examining the contact hypothesis demonstrates that inter-group contact has positive effects on prejudice—frequent contact with out-group members has been shown to increase knowl-

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**41** R. R. Premdas, "Ethnicity and Identity in the Caribbean: Decentering a Myth," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies Working Paper #234* (1996): 2.

**42** Cf. J. L. Sullivan and J. E. Transue, "The Psychological Underpinnings of Democracy: A Selective Review of Research on Political Tolerance, Interpersonal Trust, and Social Capital," *Annual Review of Psychology* 50 (1999): 625–50.

**43** Cf. W. G. Stephan and C. W. Stephan, "Cognition and Affect in Stereotyping: Parallel Interactive Networks," in *Affect, Cognition, and Stereotyping: Interactive Processes in Group Perception*, ed. D. M. Mackie and D. L. Hamilton (Orlando: Academic, 1993), 111–36; G. Stephan and C. W. Stephan, *Intergroup Relations* (Boulder: Westview, 1996).

**44** Cf. E. K. Bailey, "'I am studying in the US but': Observations and Insights from Caribbean College Students," *Social Identities* 23 (2017): 87–103.

**45** Cf. e.g. V. M. Esses et al., "Public Attitudes toward Immigrants and Immigration," in *Canadian Immigration Policy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. C. M. Beach et al. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2003), 507–36; P. M. Sniderman and L. Hagendoorn, *When Ways of Life Collide: Multiculturalism and its Discontents in the Netherlands* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

edge, liking, and positive affect thereby increasing cultural tolerance.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, research has shown a relationship between religion and intergroup contact whereby contact is associated with positive attitudes toward outgroups among religious people.<sup>47</sup>

Research also indicates that governments play a role in prejudicial attitudes.<sup>48</sup> Studies examining political tolerance indicate that promoting democratic beliefs and values, such as equality and civil rights, increases tolerance for cultural diversity thus instilling confidence and a sense of trust and security for both the out-group and in-group. Research explicitly conducted on political controllability and antisemitism demonstrated in four empirical studies that the lack of perceived political control contributes to antisemitic conspiracy theories.<sup>49</sup>

The multiculturalism hypothesis posits that support of cultural diversity leads to increased tolerance toward ethnic out-groups.<sup>50</sup> Studies in several countries found that endorsement of multi-cultural recognition, increased positive evaluations of out-groups both implicitly and explicitly,<sup>51</sup> and decreased perceptions of group threat<sup>52</sup> leads to more positive attitudes toward immigrants.

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46 Cf. T. F. Pettigrew and L. R. Tropp, "A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90 (2006): 751–83.

47 Cf. G. Piumatti and S. Russo, "Moderators of Linear and Nonlinear Associations between Religiosity, Xenophobia, and Tolerance toward Immigrants in Italy," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 11, no. 4 (2019): 399–407.

48 Cf. S. Marquart-Pyatt and P. Paxton, "In Principle and in Practice: Learning Political Tolerance in Eastern and Western Europe," *Political Behavior* 29 (2007): 89–113; H. McClosky and A. Brill, *Dimensions of Tolerance: What Americans Believe about Civil Liberties* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); Sullivan and Transue, "Psychological Underpinnings of Democracy."

49 Cf. M. Kofta et al., "What Breeds Conspiracy Antisemitism? The Role of Political Uncontrollability and Uncertainty in the Belief in Jewish Conspiracy," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 118, no. 5 (2020): 900–18.

50 Cf. M. Verkuyten, "Ethnic Group Identification and Group Evaluation among Minority and Majority Groups: Testing the Multiculturalism Hypothesis," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 88 (2005): 121–38.

51 Cf. J. A. Richeson and R. J. Nussbaum, "The Impact of Multiculturalism versus Color-Blindness on Racial Bias," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 40 (2004): 417–23, Verkuyten, "Ethnic Group Identification"; C. Wolsko et al., "Framing Interethnic Ideology: Effects of Multicultural and Color-blind Perspectives on Judgments of Groups and Individuals," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 78 (2000): 635–54.

52 Cf. K. Velasco González et al., "Prejudice towards Muslims in the Netherlands: Testing the Integrated Threat Theory," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 47 (2008): 667–85; C. Ward and A.-M. Masgoret, "An Integrative Model of Attitudes toward Immigrants," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 30 (2006): 671–82.



Recent research in terror management theory suggests that thoughts of cultural assimilation serve to reduce cultural threat. According to terror management theory,<sup>53</sup> human beings, like all other animals, are driven to survive. Yet unlike other animals, humans are uniquely aware of the inevitability of death and the ever-present potential for lethal experiences, which creates the potential for paralyzing terror. Terror management theory posits that to “manage” this potentially debilitating terror, humans created cultural worldviews (symbolic conceptions of reality shared by individuals in a group) to minimize death anxiety by imbuing the world with order, meaning, and permanence, and by providing a set of standards of valued behavior that, if satisfied, confers self-esteem and ultimately, death transcendence through symbolic and/or literal immortality. Thus, from the perspective of terror management theory, individuals manage their terror by maintaining faith in the cultural worldview and living up to the standards of value that are part of that worldview.

Cultural worldviews require continual validation from others in order to be sustained, especially when confronted with reminders of mortality. This validation occurs mainly through the process of social consensus.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the mere existence of people with similar worldviews bolsters the individual’s faith in the validity of his or her own worldview, thereby increasing its effectiveness as an anxiety-buffer. Likewise, the mere existence of people with dissimilar worldviews threatens the individual’s faith in his or her own worldview, thereby undermining its effectiveness as an anxiety-buffer. As such, people generally prefer ideas and people that conform to their worldviews and derogate ideas and people that deviate from them.

To date, hundreds of experiments around the world have established the link between death fear and attachment to cultural worldviews. Mortality reminders have increased prejudices toward Blacks, Jews, Muslims, and immigrants among others. These studies strongly suggest that investment in a cultural worldview, and obtaining a strong sense of self-esteem by meeting standards of value within that worldview, shelters people from death concerns; and, conversely, that mortality salience (MS) motivates people to bolster self-esteem and defend their worldviews.

Research exploring the role of mortality salience and political orientation in explaining attitudes in prosocial values demonstrated that following a threat,

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53 Cf. J. Greenberg et al., “The Causes and Consequences of a Need for Self-Esteem: A Terror Management Theory,” in *Public Self and Private Self*, ed. R. F. Baumeister (New York: Springer, 1986), 189–212.

54 Cf. L. Festinger, “A Theory of Social Comparison Processes,” *Human Relations* 7 (1954): 117–40.

the importance of benevolent values, which focus on the welfare of people living in close proximity, increases. More importantly, benevolence increased in importance regardless of political orientation.<sup>55</sup>

Additionally, research<sup>56</sup> suggests that when a differing other is receptive to alternative ideologies (as the Jewish inhabitants of the Caribbean have always been) then MS actually increases assimilation efforts rather than derogation. Studies showed that MS heightened Christians' efforts to assimilate receptive atheists to Christianity, rather than disparage them. These results may shed some light on the lack of antisemitism in the Caribbean. If actively engaging in the assimilation or even learning about a successful assimilation serves terror management then not only should antisemitism disappear, but Jews should be loved and respected among the Caribbean population.

Similar research<sup>57</sup> conducted on the Hawaiian Islands suggests that the general lack of prejudice there reflects their cultural worldview, or the Hawaiian value referred to as "Aloha Spirit." This value expressed as friendliness, acceptance, and tolerance is credited with affecting acceptance of the various cultures currently represented on the islands. The high rate of intermarriage in Hawaii has also been deemed to positively impact their cultural *tolerance*. Much can be inferred from the Hawaiian Islands to the Caribbean Islands who (1) share a similar "sunny" disposition, and (2) who have an increasingly large rate of intermarriage between Jews and local non-Jewish Islanders.

## Conclusions and Directions for Research

This paper aimed to provide insight on the arrival and disappearance of Jews in the Caribbean. From start to finish the paper: (1) highlighted the history of the Jewish migration to various Caribbean Islands; (2) investigated Jewish life in the Caribbean and its disappearance via live interviews and archival data; (3) highlighted the lack of antisemitism experienced by Caribbean Jewry in an

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55 Cf. Y. Naveh-Kedem and N. Sverdlik, "Changing Prosocial Values Following an Existential Threat as a Function of Political Orientation: Understanding the Effects of Armed Conflicts from a Terror Management Perspective," *Personality and Individual Differences* 150 (2019): 109494.

56 Cf. S. Kosloff et al., "Mortality Salience Motivates Attempts to Assimilate Differing Others to One's Own Worldview," unpublished manuscript, Michigan State University, 2012.

57 Cf. M. Salzman, "Ethnocultural Conflict and Cooperation in Hawai'i," in *Handbook of Ethnic Conflict: International Perspectives*, ed. D. Landis and R. D. Albert (New York: Springer Science + Business Media, 2012), 21–44.

attempt to explain it; (4) and posited psychological theories of tolerance to account for the lack of Caribbean antisemitism.

Caribbean Jewry is exceptionable on several accounts. For starters, the Caribbean Jewish community transcended space. While the Caribbean is comprised of several independent countries and colonies, the Spanish-Portuguese Jews of the Caribbean considered themselves one community and often referred to themselves as the Caribbean Jewish Nation;<sup>58</sup> they maintain the oldest Jewish community in the Western hemisphere; its community is marked by a complete lack of classic antisemitism; its established families are large, economically well off, well-educated, and except in name and heritage are no longer Jewish (most have intermarried, assimilated, and converted<sup>59</sup>). The assimilation of the Caribbean Jews took place in less than two-hundred years. On islands such as St. Maarten, they disappeared altogether.

What began as a cohesive unit has gradually disappeared, and today Jewish life in the region is difficult to find. A tour of the Caribbean Islands revealed that there are very few active Spanish-Portuguese communities in the Caribbean (Curaçao and Suriname still maintain the old synagogues), and even fewer new ones (St. Maarten maintains the new Chabad House). These communities while still active have very few congregants, and their members continue to decline. This “comfortable disappearance” devoid of acts of antisemitism and active discrimination is worrisome.

Research must be conducted to examine the underlying causes of such a disappearance. Why would a community given the option to maintain their cultural and religious identity freely chose to abandon it? Could it simply be due to a lack of Jewish education and spiritual leaders as was the case in the late eighteenth century? Or possibly the desire for economic wealth and social standing played a role. But even so, why, when finally given the opportunity to openly practice Judaism, did so few remain Jewish and so many convert to Christianity?

To even begin to scratch the surface of these questions, research must be conducted to differentiate between tolerance/acceptance of difference and tolerance/acceptance of assimilation. During the Inquisition, Jews converted but did not assimilate or truly accept the Christian way of life and continued to practice Judaism in secret and as a result were persecuted. After the Inquisition ended, Jews were not only accepted as Jews but invited into society’s elites as equals. As equals these Jews became open to the ideas of their non-Jewish counterparts and more willing to adopt their cultural norms and worldviews; in reality they

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. Arbell, *The Jewish Nation of the Caribbean*.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Goldish, *Once Jews*.

were actively recruited into society and invited to assimilate. Research on assimilation reveals that assimilation is a method of maintaining a dominant identity over out-groups. Instead of distinguishing the in-group from the out-group, members of the out-group are recruited into the in-group.<sup>60</sup> Assimilation, therefore, maintains prejudice by simply changing members of the in-group through adoption of the cultural norms and worldviews of the in-group. Those who do not assimilate are negatively judged and discriminated against.

A lesson regarding the disappearance of the Caribbean Jews may be inferred from American history. In 1906, the US government passed the Nationality Act mandating that that all immigrants seeking naturalization speak English. By 1923, thirty-four states had laws mandating English-only instruction in schools. The laws were enacted primarily to assimilate immigrants and American Indians. These laws were later rescinded, and in the 1960s the Bilingual Education Act became a federal statute recognizing the discriminatory nature of the previous laws and the importance of maintaining one's cultural identity.<sup>61</sup> Samuel P. Huntington summed up the seriousness of assimilation and identity loss quite well. In a paper critiquing the relationship between immigration and American national identity, Huntington wrote:

When I began to investigate this, my first thought was that we probably have a real problem with immigration. But then I came to the conclusion that no, while there may be an immigration problem, it isn't really a serious problem. The really serious problem is assimilation.<sup>62</sup>

The question posed earlier in this paper—where have all the Caribbean Jews gone?—may now be considered. The Caribbean Jews who settled on the islands over four-hundred years ago have been assimilated; the newcomers have moved on. Either way they are gone, and without its utility so is antisemitism.

An investigation into Caribbean Jewry can enlighten us about our own communities and future Jewish generations. Jewish intermarriage in the United States is occurring at an alarming rate<sup>63</sup> and is decreasing the size of the Amer-

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. J. F. Dovidio et al., "Why Can't We just Get Along? Interpersonal Biases and Interracial Distrust," *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 8 (2002): 88–102.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. N. Cerda and C. M. Hernandez, "Legislation Timeline," *Bilingual Education*, <http://www.freewebs.com/cerda/dz/legislationtimeline.htm>, accessed June 8, 2013. [No longer accessible.]

<sup>62</sup> S. P. Huntington, "Reconsidering Immigration: Is Mexico a Special Case?" *Center for Immigration Studies*, issued November 1, 2000, accessed July 3, 2020, <http://www.cis.org/AmericanIdentity-USMexicoImmigrationPolicy>.

<sup>63</sup> According to The Jewish Federations of North America (2013) the rates of intermarriage have increased from 13% in 1970 to 47% in 2001.

ican Jewish population. In 1997, Alan Dershowitz tackled this problem in his book, *The Vanishing American Jew*. Noting that assimilation is on the rise, he observed that because Jews have spent thousands of years surrounded by enemies looking to convert or exterminate them, they've become collectively defensive against antisemites but not against internal actions and inactions destructive to Jewish survival. He suggests that in order to survive, the Jewish people must adapt to new internal necessities and acknowledge the demographic challenges of intermarriage, assimilation, low birthrates, and the breakdown of neighborhoods and communities.<sup>64</sup>

Additionally, American Jews have become divided. There are political, religious, and cultural differences among American Jews.<sup>65</sup> The Ultra-Orthodox Jews believe that their way of religion is the only strand of Judaism that can survive while the political Zionists believe religion is outdated, and culture remains important to the survival of Judaism. Others believe that American Jews are like any other American group and Jewish tradition and ethics will keep Judaism alive. Some believe that Jewish organizations are enough, and others say that Jewish education is key.<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately, this divide has become an obvious part of the problem. Jewish identity must evolve beyond antisemitism, religion, and politics to form a united comprehensive identity inclusive of all Jews. Otherwise, if this trend continues, how long will it take for American Jewry to disappear the way Caribbean Jewry has? This is a question for all Jewish communities to consider and can serve as an example for other communities in similar situations.

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. A. M. Dershowitz, *The Vanishing American Jew: In Search of Jewish Identity for the Next Century* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1997).

<sup>65</sup> Cf. L. A. Kotler-Berkowitz, "The Structure of Political Divisions among American Jews," *Contemporary Jewry* 37, no. 1 (2017): 5–27.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. e.g. the Jewish Community Center of Greater Baltimore, <https://jcc.org/>, accessed July 9, 2020.

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Gennady Estraiikh

# Sholem Aleichem and Qumran: Jewish-Related Scholarship in the Soviet Union, 1953–1967

The Jewish academic centers established in the early Soviet state functioned almost exclusively in Yiddish and had eclipsed or subdued the remnants of Jewish studies pursued at academic and independent organizations of the pre-1917 period. In Kiev, the most vigorous of the new centers developed ultimately into the Institute of Jewish Proletarian Culture (IJPC), a structural unit of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. By 1934, the IJPC had on its payroll over seventy people in academic and administrative roles. Two years later, however, the Stalinist purges of the time had consumed the IJPC and sent many of its employees to prison to be later sentenced to death or gulag.<sup>1</sup> In Minsk, the authorities similarly destroyed the academic Institute of National Minorities, which mainly dealt with Jewish-related research.<sup>2</sup> By this time, all Jewish (in fact, Yiddish-language) educational institutions, including university departments, ceased to exist. Some scholars moved to other fields of research or left academia entirely. Soviet school instruction and cultural activity in Yiddish emerged in the territories of Poland, Romania, and the Baltic states, forcibly acquired in 1939 and 1940, but after June 22, 1941, all these disappeared in the smoke of World War II.

However, the IJPC had an afterlife: in the fall of 1936, the authorities permitted the formation of a small academic unit named the Bureau (*kabinet*) for Research on Jewish Literature, Language, and Folklore. The Bureau endured until 1949, when it fell victim to a campaign that targeted the remaining Jewish institutions. In the same year, the authorities closed the Lithuanian Jewish Museum,

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1 See, for example, D. Shneer, “A Study in Red: Jewish Scholarship in the 1920s Soviet Union,” *Science in Context* 20, no. 2 (2007): 197–213; E. Melamed, “The Fate of the Archives of the Kiev Institute of Jewish Proletarian Culture: Puzzles and Discoveries,” *East European Jewish Affairs* 42, no. 2 (2012): 99–110.

2 D. Shevelëv, “Iz istorii evreïskikh akademicheskikh podrazdeleniï v Belorusskoï Sovetskoï Sotsialisticheskoi Respublike v 1920-kh–nachale 1940-kh gg.,” in *Sovetskaïa iudaika: istoriia, problematika, personalii*, ed. M. Kupovetskii (Jerusalem and Moscow: Gesharim/Mosty kul'tury, 2017), 78–79.

which was established in Vilnius soon after the city's liberation from the Germans.<sup>3</sup> The year 1950 saw the closing of the department of Assyrian and Hebrew studies at the Oriental Faculty of the Leningrad State University.<sup>4</sup> In Tbilisi, the Historical and Ethnographic Museum of Georgian Jews survived longer, but its turn to be phased out came in 1952.<sup>5</sup> In that year, thirteen leading figures in the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAFK, 1942–1948) faced execution on August 12.<sup>6</sup> In post-Stalinist Soviet Union, no institutions or programs for studying Jews and Judaism were in existence, apart from small-scale Hebrew courses and Oriental Studies at universities and research centers in Moscow, Leningrad, and Tbilisi.

The following analysis of Jewish-related scholarly life focuses on the relatively liberal stretch of years between March 1953, when Stalin's death stopped overtly anti-Jewish campaigns, and the June 1967 war in the Middle East, which created a harsher climate for Jewish life in the Soviet Union.

## Continuation of Interrupted Projects

The bulk of the output produced by Yiddish-language academic institutions in the 1920s–1940s has become irrelevant to the radically changed societal, linguistic, and ideological environment of Jewish life today. However, this does not apply to the legacy of the momentous works in the field of Jewish ethnomusicology left by Moisei (Moyshe) Beregovsky (1892–1961). In 1927, Beregovsky initiated the establishment of the Commission for Jewish Folk Music Research at the Department of Jewish Culture of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, and, from 1929, he headed research of musical folklore at the IJPC and then—after its dismantling—at the Bureau. The purges of the 1930s spared him, but he did not avoid incarceration in the 1950s. Released from the gulag in 1955, Beregovsky returned to Kiev and, until his death, prepared his collections for publication. Although Soviet musicology generally shunned Jewish themes, the attitude to

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3 D. F. Fishman, *The Book Smugglers: Partisans, Poets, and the Race to Save Jewish Treasures from the Nazis* (Lebanon: University Press of New England, 2017), 234–35.

4 I. Axelrod-Rubin, "The Jewish Contribution to the Development of Oriental Studies in the USSR," in *Jews in Soviet Culture*, ed. J. Miller (London: Transaction Books, 1984), 287–88.

5 M. Altshuler, "Georgian Jewish Culture under the Soviet Regime," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 5, no. 2 (1975): 32–37.

6 See, for example, J. Rubenstein and V. P. Naumov, eds., *Stalin's Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

folk music was different.<sup>7</sup> As a result, Beregovsky's two books posthumously saw publication: in 1962, the Moscow publishing house Sovetsky kompozitor [Soviet Composer] produced his *Jewish Folk Songs*, edited by composer and music critic Sergey Aksiuk (1901–1994), formerly editor-in-chief of the Sovetsky kompozitor, and in 1987, the same publisher put out *Jewish Folk Instrumental Music*, edited by ethnomusicologist Max Goldin (1917–2009), who taught at the Conservatory of Riga.

Meanwhile, the Moscow Yiddish literary journal *Sovetish Heymland* [Soviet Homeland], which was started in 1961 under the editorship of the poet Aron Vergelis (1918–1999), began to play the supplementary role of an outlet, often the only one available, for publications of popular and, increasingly over the years, serious academic essays, most notably on various aspects of Yiddish philology. The journal formed a small “pale of Jewish cultural settlement,” whose internal life remained barely visible even to Soviet Jews, the prevalent majority of whom could not, or would not, read the about 10,000 copies sold around the country. Yet, in addition to its role of a forum for Yiddish literature, the journal acted also as an umbrella for various projects, including the preparation of a Russian-Yiddish dictionary.

In 1948, the Kiev Bureau's dictionary manuscript, a product of many years of work, was already in the hands of the Moscow Jewish publishing house Der Emes [Truth]. However, in November of that same year, the publishing house stopped operating, as it was closed down concurrently with the liquidation of the JAFC. In January 1949, the secret police arrested Elye Spivak (1890–1950), the Bureau's director and editor-in-chief of the dictionary, and transported him to a prison in Moscow, where he would die. Two months later, Chaim Loytsker (1898–1970), a senior scholar, was also arrested and received a sentence of fifteen years of hard labor. The year 1951 saw the arrest of two other dictionary compilers, Moyshe Maidansky (1900–1973) and Ruven Lerner (1912–1972), both sentenced to ten years of incarceration. The logic of the selection of targets for persecution often escaped contemporaries and remains a puzzle for historians. In any case, Moyshe Shapiro (1899–1973), the leading linguist of the Bureau, was never arrested. He left Kiev to teach Russian philology at the pedagogical institute in the city of Tiraspol in Moldavia (the breakaway Transnistria territory in contemporary Moldova).

In the early 1960s, Vergelis enthusiastically supported the idea to revive the dictionary project and allocated an office space for Shapiro, who had moved to

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7 J. Braun, “Jews in Soviet Music,” in *Jews in Soviet Culture*, ed. J. Miller (London: Transaction Books, 1984), 85.

Moscow after retiring from teaching in Tiraspol. Shapiro and other surviving linguists began revising and refocusing the dictionary, which, in its original design, was intended for users with a good knowledge of Yiddish. By the mid-1960s, it had to address a different audience, including people who wanted to learn the language or lacked the means to express the realities of modern life. In addition, it was necessary to take into account new Yiddish dictionaries published outside the Soviet Union by that time. In 1965, a reworked version was submitted to the publishing house *Sovetskaya Entsiklopedia* [Soviet Encyclopedia].

Shapiro and other linguists associated with the *Sovetish Heymland* rejected the militant purism practiced by some of their American colleagues, who were always on the warpath against etymologically “unacceptable” words. According to Shapiro, however, the German, Hebrew, or Slavic origin of the word was of less importance than its authenticity, stylistic adequacy, and clarity. Although the *Sovetish Heymland* toed the official Soviet line of rejecting the notion of a worldwide Jewish nation, the journal, a publication with a cultural-diplomatic mission, sought to attract foreign readers. Therefore it did not try to erect an artificial wall between the Soviet and non-Soviet varieties of Yiddish. Shapiro even doubted the value of the notion of Soviet Yiddish:

This definition never had nor could have any terminological meaning, since it never meant a new quality of a literary language different from the literary Yiddish outside the borders of the Soviet Union. In fact, there were only a few peculiarities which could justify speaking (even conditionally) of a specific Soviet Yiddish style.<sup>8</sup>

Significantly, although the journal and other Moscow Yiddish publications did not reintroduce the traditional spelling of Hebrew words, the final consonant letters, characteristic for Hebrew and non-Soviet Yiddish, reappeared in the journal after three decades of abandoning them as a result of the radical orthographic reform.<sup>9</sup>

The compilers hoped the dictionary would come out in 1967. However, the publisher’s guidelines demanded serious, time-consuming improvements. At some stage, the text incorporated a clandestine epitaph to the leading figures in the JAFC executed on August 12, 1952: the combination of words “on the twelfth of August” illustrated the usage of “twelfth,” although examples of usage did not accompany any other ordinal numbers. The dictionary, which final-

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<sup>8</sup> G. Estraiikh, *Soviet Yiddish: Language Planning and Linguistic Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 108–9.

<sup>9</sup> G. Estraiikh, “Soviet Yiddish Orthography: An Iron Logic or Coincidence?” *Shvut* 1–2 (1995): 218–41.

ly appeared in 1984, was, in a sense, a memorial to the Soviet Yiddish linguists of the IJPC and the Bureau. None of them lived to see this publication completed by Moyshe (Moyni) Shulman (1911–1994), a retired senior editor of the *Sovetish Heymland*.<sup>10</sup>

## Moyshe Belenky

Moyshe (Moisei) Belenky (1910–1996) never contributed to the *Sovetish Heymland*, because he sought to be appointed its editor, and this competition between himself and Vergelis made them sworn enemies. While still a student himself at the Moscow Teachers Training Institute, which had a Yiddish department until 1938 and was the alma mater of many Yiddish literati, he began to teach Marxist-Leninist philosophy to students of the theater school at the Moscow State Yiddish Theater and then, in 1932–1949, he worked as the school’s director. Later he combined this position with that of editor-in-chief of the publishing house Der Emes. Arrested in 1949, he was held incarcerated until 1954. Upon his release and legal rehabilitation, Belenky pursued two parallel careers, one in Jewish literary scholarship and one in philosophy (he taught at the prestigious Shchukin Theater School in Moscow), with emphasis on topics of scientific atheism. This field, propagandistic in nature though with an academic slant, received a push in 1954, when two decrees formulated a new approach to dealing with the “survivals” of religious mentality. Religion had no place in communist society of the near future as envisioned by Nikita Khrushchev, and atheism, specifically Marxist scientific atheism, should build a solid dam against it.<sup>11</sup>

Belenky was perfectly prepared to work in scientific atheism. As early as 1941, he published a Yiddish book entitled *Acosta, Spinoza, and Maimonides*. According to Belenky, Uriel Acosta, “one of the first critics of the Bible, gravitated to materialism,” whereas Baruch Spinoza “furthered materialist examination of the world.” Maimonides, or Rambam, on the other hand, fought for “the freedom of

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10 W. Moskovich, “An Important Event in Soviet Yiddish Cultural Life: The New Russian-Yiddish Dictionary,” *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 14, no. 3 (1984): 31–49; W. Moskovich, “The Russian-Yiddish Dictionary of 1984 and the Problems of the Maintenance of Soviet Yiddish after the Second World War,” in *Under the Red Banner: Yiddish Culture in the Communist Countries in the Post-war Era*, ed. E. Grözinger and M. Ruta (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), 231–38; L. Flîat, “I slovar’, i pamiatnik,” *My zdes’* 581, March 8–18, 2018, <http://www.newswe.com/index.php?go=Pages&in=view&id=1945>.

11 J. Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 16.

reason, but in some philosophical issues he slipped to the positions of idealism.” Belenky emphasized that he based his research on the Marxist methodology, because there was no other way to understand fully and correctly the philosophers’ worldviews and their places in the history of human thought.<sup>12</sup>

The Marxist approach also implied a heavy ideological bias. In 1959, Belenky wrote that “Judaism, like any other religion, represents a conservative and reactionary worldview.” Moreover, according to him, “Israeli clericals solidarize[d] with fascist cannibals-cum-racists.”<sup>13</sup> He continued to study the three philosophers, but Spinoza and Acosta were more welcome in the Soviet ideological climate. His 1964 book, *Spinoza*, came out in the respected and widely read series *Life of Remarkable People*. In 1956, the All-Union Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge published Belenky’s supporting material for lectures on *The Origin and Class Essence of Judaism*. His pamphlet, *What is the Talmud*, came out in 1960, and the same title appeared again in 1963 and 1970, on the covers of his much weightier volumes.

Belenky was not, by any means, the only author writing on Judaism. Critique of Judaism played a significant role in the work of other scientific atheists, including Giler Livshits (1909–1983), a distinguished Minsk-based historian of antiquity and religion. An important figure in the field was Mikhail Shakhnovich (1911–1992), whose first book, *The Social Essence of the Talmud*, appeared as early as 1929. One of the founders of the Museum of History of Religion in Leningrad (St. Petersburg), Shakhnovich worked as its leading scholar. In his 1960 book, entitled *The Reactionary Essence of Judaism*, Shakhnovich argued that Judaism created conditions for spreading ideologies of Zionism and American imperialism, as well as for gender inequality.<sup>14</sup> His monograph *The Decline of Judaism* followed in 1965. Judaism remained, however, a sideline in Shakhnovich’s voluminous output. In general, in an imagined competition among scientific atheists dealing with various aspects of Jewish religion, the laurels for the most prolific author would certainly go to Belenky.

In 1960, Belenky’s pamphlet *The Talmud in the Light of Science* appeared in Moscow. And 1962 saw the publication of his edited volume, *The Critique of Judaism*, which came out under the imprimatur of the History Institute at the Academy of Sciences. In his 1966 monograph *Judaism*, he praised the Karaites for becoming a voice of “the latent protest of Jewish masses against the inhuman

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<sup>12</sup> M. S. Belen’kiĭ, *Akoste, Shpinoze, Maymon* (Moscow: Der Emes, 1941), 3–4.

<sup>13</sup> M. S. Belen’kiĭ, “O sovremennom iudaizme v SShA i Izraile,” *Voprosy istorii religii i ateizma* 7 (1959): 106, 115.

<sup>14</sup> M. Shakhnovich, “Pravda o sovremennom iudaizme,” *Agitator* 23 (1963): 52–54.

exploitation, justified and defended by the Talmud.”<sup>15</sup> He fired his criticism at Rabbi Yehudah Leib Levin (1894–1971) of the Moscow Choral Synagogue for preaching that Jews were provided with *nitzotz elokim*, the divine spark in the soul, which kept them attached to the Jewish faith.<sup>16</sup> Conflating anti-clericalism with anti-Zionism, Belenky went on to (mis)inform his readers about the legalities of life in Israel. Thus, according to him, an uncircumcised boy could not become a citizen of the country, and a woman had limited legal rights in many spheres of Israeli life.<sup>17</sup> (Even still, in 1990 he would settle in Rehovot, Israel.)

In 1967, the Moscow State University’s Department of History and Theory of Atheism accepted his dissertation on *Critical Analysis of the Dogma, Cult and Ideology of Judaism* and thus effectively certified him as a top specialist. It is highly questionable, though, if his books fulfilled the claimed mission of “firmly shattering the myth of supernatural origin of Jewish religion, holidays, and rites” and “showing the reactionary nature of Judaism.”<sup>18</sup> According to Alexander Grushevoi, a historian of antiquity and the Middle East, Belenky’s writings on the Talmud have little to do with scholarship. Still, he commends Belenky’s work as, at that time, the only widely accessible source of information on this topic.<sup>19</sup>

## Literary Scholarship

Despite the devastating losses endured by Yiddish literary circles during World War II and the Stalinist repression, the *Sovetish Heymland* could always rely on scores of contributors, including literary scholars. In one of his first interviews, Vergelis stated: “We are allotting much space in our magazine to problems of literary theory and criticism.”<sup>20</sup> Initially, Nokhem Oyslender (1893–1962), a central figure in Soviet Yiddish literary life from its early days, acted as the doyen of the critical guild heading the journal’s department of literary criticism. However, a year after the journal was started, this position became vacant.

Hersh (Grigory) Remenik (1905–1981), Oyslender’s replacement, belonged to the generation schooled during the Soviet period. He graduated from the Yiddish

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15 M. Belen’kiĭ, *Iudaizm* (Moscow: Political Literature Press, 1966), 130.

16 *Ibid.*, 9.

17 *Ibid.*, 94, 222.

18 *Ibid.*, 237–38.

19 A. G. Grushevoi, “K istorii izucheniĭa v Rossii Talmuda i perioda ego sozdaniĭa,” *Pis’memye pamiĭatniki Vostoka* 1 (2007): 95.

20 S. Chertok, “A New Magazine in Yiddish,” *Soviet Literature* 1 (1962): 178.



department at the Odessa Pedagogical Institute and worked as a teacher in an old Jewish agricultural colony in Ukraine. In 1934, the Yiddish department at the Moscow Pedagogical Institute admitted him as a graduate student, and in 1937, after defending his dissertation on Sholem Aleichem's novellas, he received the academic title of candidate of philological sciences. (The advanced academic degrees of "candidate" and "doctor" were introduced in the Soviet Union in 1934.) Two years later, however, Remenik was arrested. Following his liberation and legal rehabilitation, around 1955, he taught Russian literature at the pedagogical institute in Yaroslavl, an old Russian city. After moving to Moscow to replace Oyslender at the department of literary criticism, Remenik played an important role in shaping the literary-critical politics of the journal and engaging other literary specialists. In its first issue of 1966, the *Sovetish Heymland* reported (p. 109) that in December 1965, he had organized a "scientific session" devoted to Y. L. Peretz, marking the fiftieth anniversary of the classic writer's death.

Hillel Aleksandrov (1890–1972), who came to the "session" from Leningrad, began his academic career in Minsk as a specialist in social-demographic aspects of Jewish life, but in 1933, he settled in Leningrad and worked there as a professor at the Institute of History, Philosophy, and Linguistics. Arrested in 1937, he was not released until 1959 and then taught at the Oriental Faculty of the Leningrad University. He wrote in the *Sovetish Heymland* about his archival findings, most notably about the legacy of Israel Tsinberg (1873–1939), the pre-eminent historian of Jewish literature, whose death he witnessed in the gulag.<sup>21</sup>

Khatskl Nadel (1905–1968) and Oyzer Holdes (born Holdesheym, 1900–1966), came to the Peretz conference from Kharkiv. They were holdovers from the time, until 1934, when the city was the capital of Soviet Ukraine and, as such, housed Jewish cultural, educational, and publishing organizations. Both were arrested in 1951 and could return to Kharkiv only after several years in the gulag. Holdes was reinstated as a member of the Writers Union, whereas Nadel renewed his work as a bibliographer, being hailed as the founder of the local academic tradition in the field of bibliography.<sup>22</sup> Irme Druker (1906–1982), an Odessa-based writer and student of literature, was also incarcerated from 1950 to 1956. His book on Mendele Moykher-Sforim, *The Grandfather Mendele*, came out in Yiddish in Warsaw in 1964.

21 G. Eliasberg, "...Odin iz prezhnego Peterburga": S. L. Tsinberg—istorik evreiskoi literatury, kritik i publiĭsist (Moscow: Russian State University for the Humanities, 2005), 146.

22 S. B. Glibiĭskaĭa, "Osnovatel' khar'kovskoi universitetskoi shkoly bibliografov: X. S. Nadel' (1905–1968): k 110-letĭiu so dnĭa rozhdeniĭa," *Bibliotechnii forum: istoriĭa, teoriĭa i praktika* 1 (2015): 58–60.

In the *Sovetish Heymland's* “pale of literary settlement,” critics and historians could analyze works by authors who were of no interest to the rest of Soviet academia. Outside the “pale,” the list of Yiddish writers usually ended up where it started: Sholem Aleichem. The mini-industry that emerged in the 1920s and matured in the 1930s and the 1940s around Sholem Aleichem-related cultural activities continued to function during the last Soviet decades.<sup>23</sup> In 1963, Remenik’s biography of Sholem Aleichem, published in Russian with a print-run of 10,000 copies, gained the praise of *The New York Times* (17 November 1963, p. 40), which characterized the book as a “warm, sympathetic biography and literary criticism of Sholem Aleichem.” In 1972, Remenik defended a doctoral dissertation on Sholem Aleichem’s oeuvre, at the Institute of World Literature. It was the only dissertation on Yiddish literature defended in the Soviet Union in the 1950s–1980s. The defense became possible thanks to Uran Guralnik (1921–1989), a leading scholar of the institute and a contributor to the *Sovetish Heymland*.

Another reputed leading scholar on Sholem Aleichem was Riva Rubina (1906–1987), who in the 1930s lectured on the history of Yiddish literature at the Minsk Pedagogical Institute and, from 1934, at the Moscow Pedagogical Institute. Later she established herself as a compiler and commentator of Russian translations of Sholem Aleichem’s writings. In the 1950s, she continued her activity, which began in 1940, when the State Publishing House produced her edited collection of stories by the classic writer. The year 1956, the fortieth anniversary of Sholem Aleichem’s death, saw the publication of his stories for children edited by Rubina for the Publishing House of Children’s Literature. Then in 1957, the State Publishing House put out a seven-hundred-page volume of Sholem Aleichem’s prose with an introduction written by Rubina. And in 1959, the year of Sholem Aleichem’s centenary, another smaller collection of his writings carried Rubina’s introduction. A biographical article written by her also opened the first volume of the jubilee collection of Sholem Aleichem’s works, which had a quarter of a million print-run for each of its six volumes.

The Soviet ideological apparatus saw the Sholem Aleichem centenary as a public relation, or cultural diplomatic, opportunity for showing the world that Jewish culture enjoyed full state support. In this climate, Israel Serebriani (1900–1978), a Yiddish literary scholar, had a chance to publish his book *Sholem Aleichem and Folk Creativity* in Russian. Originally written in Yiddish, it was translated by Rashel Miller-Budnitskaia (1906–1967), who taught foreign literature at the Moscow Region Pedagogical Institute.

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<sup>23</sup> G. Estraikh, “Soviet Sholem Aleichem,” in *Translating Sholem Aleichem: History, Politics and Art*, ed. G. Estraikh, J. D. Finkin, and M. Krutikov (Oxford: Legenda, 2012), 62–82.

Belenky, ubiquitous in virtually all domains of Soviet Jewish cultural life, played a central role in the production of books by and on Sholem Aleichem. The first job that he found after his release from the gulag was at the State Publishing House of Belles-Lettres, the parent organization of the liquidated Der Emes. There, he dealt with the project of a hundred volume series of Jewish literature translated into Russian.<sup>24</sup> This project was aborted soon after conception, but in the meantime, Belenky had secured for himself an influential place in Jewish-related publishing and was the main person responsible for compiling and editing the six-volume centenary edition of Sholem Aleichem's oeuvre.

## Ancient History and Philology

It is certainly no coincidence that “history” was conspicuously absent in the name of the remnant of the IJPC—the Bureau for Research on Jewish Literature, Language, and Folklore. Publications on ethnic history were of particular concern to Soviet ideologists. Peeter Tulviste, an Estonian scholar, wrote about ethnic identity that to a significant degree it

can be conceived as consisting of various texts which interact with each other [...] From this point of view, history texts of various kinds interact with each other and many other texts in the formation as well as the functioning of individual identity.<sup>25</sup>

A Soviet Jew usually had few, if any, texts on Jewish history for her or his identity-generating interactions. Significantly, vigilant functionaries in the Communist Party's Central Committee routinely blocked publication of scholarly works devoted to the Holocaust, and the term itself did not appear in the vocabulary of Soviet books and periodicals.

Readers interested in Jewish history would look for indirect ways of getting access to information, finding it usually in occasional journalistic coverage of historical topics or in belles-letters, such as the writings of the German Jewish novelist Lion Feuchtwanger, the most broadly published German-language writer in the Soviet Union. According to the Soviet statistics for 1917–1957, his books came out in sixty editions, translated into eight languages spoken in the Soviet

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<sup>24</sup> G. Kenig, “Der ‘goldener fond’ fun der yidisher literatur in sovjetn-farband,” *Morgn-Frayhayt*, October 19, 1956, 4.

<sup>25</sup> P. Tulviste, “History Taught at School Versus History Discovered at Home: The Case of Estonia,” *European Journal of Psychology of Education* 9, no. 2 (1994): 122–23.

Union, with the total print run of over 2.6 million copies.<sup>26</sup> Shimon Markish wrote the following about the Feuchtwanger phenomenon:

in the second half of the 1950s and in the 1960s his works were published in the USSR many times. All of his novels with the exception of *Jephthas Tochter* (Jephtha's Daughter) were published or republished within this fifteen-year period, and his collected works in twelve volumes were published in an edition of 300,000 copies. In all, this comprised a kind of compendium of Jewish history from the beginning of the Christian era to the Nazi persecutions. Most Jews of my generation and of the generation after mine experienced the fascination of Feuchtwanger, if not always as a writer at least as a Jew.<sup>27</sup>

At the same time, Soviet scholars' studies of the ancient past sometimes touched on aspects of Jewish history. Such esoteric topics were obviously considered harmless and incapable of boosting Jewish historical memory. For instance, readers had access to the 1962 book *History of the Khazars* by Mikhail Artamonov (1898–1972), director of the State Hermitage Museum in Leningrad. A decade before its publication, Artamonov had a difficult stretch in his life. In December 1951, he, an archeologist, was attacked in the *Pravda*, the central party daily newspaper, for claiming that Khazaria served as a model for Ancient Russia.<sup>28</sup> Rumors ascribed the article, bylined "P. Ivanov," to various people, including Stalin. It was indeed a serious matter in the climate of the time, when the agit-prop expected to see validation of Russia's role as a pioneer rather than an imitator. The experience of the early 1950s left an imprint on Artamonov's 1962 book, which claimed *inter alia* that adoption of the Jewish religion by the ruling class of Khazaria was "a fatal step," because it severed the government from the people, replaced pastoral nomadism and agriculture with mercantile middlemen, and led to the "parasitic enrichment of the ruling elite."<sup>29</sup>

This idea that the Khazar state became parasitic after accepting Judaism found further development in the work of the leading Soviet archeologist Svetlana Pletneva (1926–2008).<sup>30</sup> Mikhail Ikhilov (1917–1998), who defended

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26 C. Wachsmann, *Der sowjetische Heine: Die Heinrich Heine-Rezeption in den russischsprachigen Rezeptionstexten der Sowjetunion (1917–1953)* (Berlin: Weißensee, 2001), 2.

27 S. Markish, "The Role of Officially Published Russian Literature in the Reawakening of Jewish National Consciousness (1953–1970)," in *Jewish Culture and Identity in the Soviet Union*, ed. Y. Ro'i and A. Beker (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 227–28.

28 P. Ivanov, "Ob odnoī oshibochnoī kontseptsii," *Pravda*, December 25, 1951, 3.

29 Artamonov's 1962 book was also criticized by some historians—see, for example, I. A. Fëdorov's review in *Voprosy istorii* 3 (1963): 146–50.

30 P. B. Golden, "Khazar Studies: Achievements and Perspectives," in *The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives. Selected Papers from the Jerusalem 1999 International Khazar Colloquium*, ed.

his dissertation on history and culture of Mountain (or Caucasus) Jews at the Moscow Institute of Ethnography in 1949, wrote about Khazars' involvement in the ethnogenesis of Mountain Jews. In his treatment of the subject, some of the Khazars were assimilated by the core group of Jews who had come to the Caucasus from Persia.<sup>31</sup>

1951 saw the revival of the Palestinian Society, whose roots stemmed from the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society, established in 1882. Although the revitalized society functioned under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences, its mission was predominantly in the domain of politics. In January 1962, Armand Volkov, the Jerusalem-based representative of the Palestinian Society and himself an orientalist scholar, visited the Central Rabbinical Library of Israel. He promised to organize exchange of publications and said that there was room for visits to the Soviet Union by Israeli academics.<sup>32</sup> In June 1962, Zvi Harkavy (1908–1979), director of the Central Rabbinical Library, returned from a visit, lasting several weeks, to libraries of Moscow and Leningrad. It was a visit to the country where Harkavy was born and spent the first two decades of his life. He brought an agreement with the Leningrad State Public Library (from 1992, the National Library of Russia), permitting Israeli researchers to receive copies of Hebrew manuscripts.<sup>33</sup>

The Palestinian Society's journal, *Palestinskii sbornik* [Palestine Miscellany], became an important outlet for academic publications. No mention of the State (or pre-state period) of Israel would appear in its pages, but the taboo did not apply to medieval history of Jews and to ancient Israel. Professor Isaac Vinnikov (1897–1973), one of the semitologists who contributed to the journal, headed the department of Assyrian and Hebrew studies at the Leningrad University's Oriental Faculty in 1945–1949 and returned to the university after the forced hiatus in the late Stalinist years. At the 25th International Congress of Orientalists held in Moscow in August 1960, Vinnikov chaired the session addressed by Yigal Yadin, a general turned well-known archaeologist, one of the twelve members of the Israeli delegation. Vinnikov emphasized the importance of applying Marxist meth-

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P. B. Golden, H. Ben-Shammai, and A. Róna-Tas (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 34; L. S. Klejn, *Soviet Archaeology: Trends, Schools, and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 304.

<sup>31</sup> M. Ikhilov, *Narodnosti lezginskoi gruppy* (Makhachkala: The Dagestan Branch of the Academy of Sciences, 1967), 149–52.

<sup>32</sup> "Head of Russian Palestine Society Visits Hechal Shlomo," *Jerusalem Post*, January 5, 1962, 3.

<sup>33</sup> "Israeli Scientists Will Attend Red Parley," *The Sentinel*, June 28, 1962, 8.

ods to biblical studies, which meant to look into social and economic context of biblical texts through the prism of classics of socialist theories.<sup>34</sup>

The *Palestinskii sbornik* published articles by the well-established scholar in Arabic, Aramaic, and Talmudic studies, Iulii (Iudel) Solodukho (1877–1963), whose research focused on the Babylonian Talmud but was categorized as studies of ancient Iraq and Iran. The purges miraculously bypassed Solodukho, despite the fact that in his youth, before turning into a Soviet orientalist, he was involved in rather “questionable” activities: he studied at the famed Volozhin yeshiva, was a delegate at the Fifth Zionist Congress, and participated in the Hebrew language movement. According to the American scholar of Judaism Jacob Neusner, Solodukho “made the effort both to preserve the traditions of Talmud learning acquired in his youth and to master and make use of the Marxist hermeneutic which came to dominance in his mature years.”<sup>35</sup>

Less fortunate was Iosif Amusin (1910–1984), a specialist in the history of the ancient Near East, who, as a member of a Zionist youth organization, lived through the experience of exile, 1926–1930, and incarceration, 1938–1939. Still, he graduated from the Leningrad University and served in the army during World War II. After 1945, he taught ancient history at the Leningrad Pedagogical Institute and the Leningrad University until he was fired during the campaign against “cosmopolitanism.” After a period of unemployment, he found a job at the Pedagogical Institute in the Volga city of Ulianovsk. Upon returning to Leningrad in 1954, Amusin worked as a research fellow at the Institute of Archaeology and the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and showed great interest in the Dead Sea, or Qumran, scrolls.<sup>36</sup>

The first Soviet semitologist’s article on the Dead Sea scrolls, written by Amusin’s colleague Klavdia Starkova (1915–2000), appeared in 1958 in the journal *Vestnik drevnei istorii* [Bulletin of Ancient History]. Boris Smolar, editor-in-chief emeritus of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (in the 1920s, he represented the JTA in Moscow and continued to keep a close eye on the situation in the Soviet Union), wrote about Starkova in 1969 after visiting Leningrad: “a Russian

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34 “Voprosy drevnei istorii i filologii na 25-om mezhdunarodnom kongresse vostokovedov v Moskve,” *Vestnik drevnei istorii* 2 (1961): 143–64.

35 I. Solodukho, *Soviet Views of Talmudic Judaism: Five Papers by Yu. A. Solodukho in English Translation*, ed. J. Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1973), ix.

36 L. N. Gluskina, “The Life and Work of Joseph Amussin,” *Revue de Qumrân* 14, no. 1 (1989): 109–20; Ia. V. Vasil’kov, A. M. Grishina, and F. F. Perchenok, “Repressirovannoe vostokovedenie: vostokovedy, podverghiesiâ repressiiâ v 20–50-e gody,” *Narody Azii i Afriki* 4 (1990): 116.

woman who has a record in the scholarly world as being dedicated to the study of the history of the Jewish people.”<sup>37</sup>

However, semitologists were not the only scholars interested in the Dead Sea scrolls. Giler Livshits’ *The Qumran Scrolls and Their Historical Significance*, the first pamphlet-sized description of the findings made in the Qumran gorge of the Dead Sea, was published in 1959 under the imprint of the Belorussian State University, where the author worked from 1958. In 1967, he put out a much more substantial volume, *The Origin of Christianity in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Livshits’ 1957 book, *The Class Struggle in Judea and Uprisings against Rome*, which essentially historicized biblical events and characters, had been a cause of concern to his dogmatic colleagues, who went as far as to insist on destroying the entire print run. Ultimately, the book reached readers thanks to enthusiastic reviews by influential Moscow historians. Still, a chapter on the Jewish diaspora of that time saw publication only a quarter of century after Livshits’ death.<sup>38</sup>

While scholars turned to studying the Dead Sea scrolls exclusively, or at least primarily, for purely academic interest, the Soviet ideological watchdogs welcomed such studies for a completely different reason, highlighted, for instance, in a review of the 1960 book *Scrolls of the Dead Sea* by history popularizer Anatoly Varshavsky (1920–1990). Scientific atheists could use the dating (long before Jesus), provenance, and content of the scrolls for arguing that the official history of Christianity and, by extension, of other religions represented “an enormous falsification.”<sup>39</sup> As a result, Varshavsky’s book came out in 50,000 copies under the imprint of the Molodaia gvardiia [Young (Communist) Guard], one of the biggest Moscow publishing houses. Also in 1960, the Moscow Publishing House of Political Literature put on the market the book *Findings in the Judean Desert* co-authored by Sergei Kovalev (1886–1960), director of the Museum of Religion and Atheism, and Mikhail Kublanov (1914–1998), a historian of religion. This book had a print run of 55,000. Its revised edition, followed in 1964, had even a bigger print run—68,000.

Kovalev and Kublanov, as well as some other Soviet historians, impugned one of the previously unquestionable postulates of Soviet historiography of early Christianity, namely that the birthplace of the new religion located outside Palestine. The postulate originated from Friedrich Engels’s statement:

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37 B. Smolar, “Russia Today,” *Jewish Advocate*, January 2, 1969, 7.

38 G. Livshits, *Giler Markovich Livshits: K 100-letiiu so dniā rozhdeniā*, ed. V.A. Fedosik et al. (Minsk: Belorussian State University, 2009).

39 M. Andreev, “Rukopisi Mėrtvogo moriā,” *V mire knig* 3 (1961): 6.

The legend that Christianity arose ready and complete out of Judaism and, starting from Palestine, conquered the world with its dogma already defined in the main and its morals, ... can continue to vegetate only in the theological faculties and with people who wish "to keep religion alive for the people" even at the expense of science.<sup>40</sup>

Alexander Kazhdan (1922–1997), a Soviet Byzantinologist who had been publishing studies on the Dead Sea scrolls since the 1950s, argued that the whole massive tradition of Marxist scholars' assertion that Christianity was born in Asia Minor, not in Palestine, stemmed from misinterpretations of Engels's original writings. Kazhdan, who consequently emigrated from the Soviet Union and worked as an academic in the United States, also came to the cautiously phrased conclusion that Jesus was a historical person.<sup>41</sup>

Although Starkova, who pioneered study of Qumran in the Soviet Union, continued to publish on this theme, Amusin's works would dominate the Soviet book market. His book *The Dead Sea Scrolls* came out in Moscow in two editions, in 1960 and 1961. In 1962, it appeared in a Slovak translation; translations into Polish and Romanian followed in 1963.<sup>42</sup> In 1965, Amusin was awarded a doctorate for this research. At the award ceremony, he concluded his speech with a quote, in Hebrew, from the Pirkei Avot, a tractate that contains sayings and ethical teachings of the rabbinic sages: "You are not expected to finish the job, but you cannot shirk the obligation to undertake it."<sup>43</sup> In the same year, the Moscow publishing house Nauka (Science) put out 60,000 copies of Amusin's new book, *Finds at the Dead Sea*, edited by Vasily Struve (1889–1965), the founder of the Soviet school of historical research of Ancient Orient. In his introduction, one of his last written works, Struve referred to Engels's recommendation to study the historical conditions which led to the rise of Christianity. In other words, he emphasized that Amusin's work was useful from the point of view of Marxist scholarship.

Amusin's books continued to appear in the coming years, even after 1967, when a vigilant eye might deem the topic of Qumran ideologically harmful, being, at least geographically, "too close" to Zionism. His paper, prepared for

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<sup>40</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *K. Marx and F. Engels on Religion* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1957), 321.

<sup>41</sup> D. V. Pospelovsky, *Soviet Antireligious Campaigns and Persecutions* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 6–7; O. V. Metel, "Sovetskaia istoriografiia pervonachal'nogo khristianstva v kontse 50–60-kh gg XX v.," *Vestnik Omskogo universiteta* 4 (2007): 107–11.

<sup>42</sup> Z. J. Kapera, "A Bibliography of J. D. Amussin: Concerning the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Revue de Qumrân* 14, no. 1 (1989): 121–26.

<sup>43</sup> N. Shraga, "Soviet Jew Gets Ph.D. for Thesis on Jewish Subjects," *The Jerusalem Post*, June 22, 1965, 3.



the 27th International Congress of Orientalists held in Ann Arbor in August 1967, was circulated and reviewed, though he did not attend the event. The Soviets, as well as Czechoslovaks, Bulgarians, and East Germans had decided to withdraw at the last moment, due to the current international situation—the war in Vietnam and the tensions in the Middle East—which made the time inopportune for cultural and scholarly exchange.<sup>44</sup>

## Israel Studies

By either their own choice or the decision of some policy-makers, Leningrad semitologists were little involved in Israel-related studies or cultural projects. True, Lev (Arye Chaim Leyb) Vilsker (1919–1988), Amusin’s brother-in-law, who graduated from the Leningrad University in 1950 as a specialist in semitology and worked at the Public Library, did numerous literary translations from Hebrew, signing them “Vilsker-Shumsky.” Shumsk—now a town in the Ternopol region of Ukraine—was his birthplace. His translations of contemporary literary works appeared in the 1960s, when Moscow publishers had released four books of Russian translation of Israeli authors. One of them, the 1966 collection of novellas written originally in Hebrew, Arabic, and Yiddish carried the title *Searchers of Pearls*. It came out under Vilsker’s editorship. (In the 1980s, Vilsker would publish his research articles in the *Sovetish Heymland*, most notably on unknown poems of Yehuda Halevi.)

Nonetheless, the establishment of the State of Israel had necessitated training of people specifically for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other Soviet agencies. Joseph Braginsky (1905–1989), a well-known Soviet Orientalist, encouraged Feliks (Fayvl) Shapiro (1879–1961) to work as a teacher of Hebrew. He knew Shapiro, because many years ago their fathers taught at the same Jewish school in Baku. Shapiro also had experience teaching Hebrew but later changed his profession. Now, retired, he was happy to return to Hebrew, the more so as it filled his life with interest and brought additional income.

In 1954, Shapiro threw himself, body and soul, into the work over a Hebrew-Russian dictionary. Israeli radio programs helped him to reflect the contemporary language usage. For the same purpose, he asked Shmuel Minunis, the head of the Communist Party of Israel, who visited Shapiro at home, to send

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<sup>44</sup> “Orientalists Begin Meeting in Michigan,” *The New York Times*, August 14, 1967, 6; Z. J. Kaspera, “The Qumran Commentaries and their Significance for the History of the Qumran Community by Joseph Amusin,” *Revue de Qumrân* 6, no. 4 (1969): 590–92.

him a Hebrew newspaper, the Communist Party's *Kol Haam* (Voice of the People). Shapiro's death in 1961 delayed the publication of the dictionary, however. Two people played decisive roles in preparing the publication afterwards: Abraham Rubinshtein (d. 1981), a former Jewish actor and later a lecturer of Hebrew at Moscow universities, and Bentsion Grande (1891–1974), a leading Soviet semitologist. Grande wrote an overview of Hebrew grammar for this edition.<sup>45</sup> In large part thanks to this dictionary, the word *ivrit* (Hebrew) increasingly appeared in Soviet publications. Clearly, the term *drevneevreiskii iazyk* [Old Jewish language], used in Russian-language literature, could no longer be used to denote the Hebrew spoken in contemporary Israel.<sup>46</sup>

In 1964, Tbilisi hosted the first Conference on Semitic languages, with papers on ancient and modern Hebrew. The choice of the place was not random: the Tbilisi University had a department of Semitic studies at the Faculty of Oriental Studies. In 1960, the founder and head of the department, the distinguished orientalist Giorgi V. Tsereteli (1904–1973), was allowed to establish the Institute of Oriental Studies at the university. Shapiro and Rubinshtein took part in the Tbilisi conference with papers on the contemporary lexis of Hebrew. Michael Zand (b. 1927), a Moscow orientalist whose main expertise was in the Persian and Tajik languages and cultures, spoke on Yiddish as a substrate of contemporary Hebrew.<sup>47</sup> (A decade later, Zand's struggle for emigration to Israel won the support of academicians in the United States and other countries.)

In Moscow, the academic Institute of Oriental Studies had scholars specializing in Israel studies. In 1953, one of them, Galina Nikitina (1924–1982), defended a candidate dissertation, on the basis of which she wrote her 1956 book *The Suez Canal—the National Asset of the Egyptian People*. The idea that Israel had revealed itself as an aggressive outpost of the USA was central in her 1958 article "Israel and American Imperialism."<sup>48</sup> Economic and political expansion of Israel in Africa, a popular topic in the Soviet press, was also discussed in academic publications, notably in Nikitina's 1963 article in the scholarly journal *Peoples*

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45 "1962, Moskve, ivrit-rusish verterbukh," *Sovetish Heymland* 5 (1962): 104; L. Prestina and F. L. Shapiro, *Slovar' zapreshchennogo iazyka: 125-letiiu F. L. Shapiro* (Minsk: MET, 2005), 18, 20–22, 175; Iu. I. Kostenko, "Prepodavanie ivrita v MGIMO," *Iazyk ivrit: issledovanie i prepodavanie* 43 (Moscow: Sefer, 2012), 102–4.

46 A. Iu. Aikhenval'd, *Sovremennyi ivrit* (Moscow: Nauka, 1990), 8–9.

47 M. Agranovskaia, *Evrei v Rossii: istoriograficheskie ocherki 2-iā polovina XIX veka–XX vek* (Moscow: Jewish University, 1994), 173.

48 G. S. Nikitina, "Izrail' i amerikanskii imperializm," *Sovetskoe vostokovedenie* 5 (1958): 71–79.

of *Asia and Africa*.<sup>49</sup> Judging by her publications, she could not read Hebrew sources and relied on translations and publications in English. Her 1968 book *The State of Israel: A Historical Economic and Political Study* (which also came out in Polish and English and shaped her 1977 doctoral dissertation—the first Soviet doctoral dissertation on Israel) would set a tone for academic endeavors in this field.<sup>50</sup> Some contemporary authors find parallels between Nikitina’s analysis and the later theories of the Israeli “new historians” and “critical sociologists,” particularly in rejecting the claims that Jewish-Israeli history represented a continuous national history, starting with the biblical era and going on unbroken until the establishment of the State of Israel.<sup>51</sup>

## Conclusion

As part of the strategy aimed at assimilation of Jews to the dominant culture, the ideological apparatus of the Soviet Union could consider its strategy of restricting and deforming Jewish-related academic and popular scholarship publications a success. This strategy had contributed to depriving the vast majority of Soviet Jews of cultural memory. To them, Jewish history was a virtual blank. Few people had access to books, including ones brought overtly or covertly from abroad, which could satisfy their curiosity and contribute to fostering their national pride and identity. Suppression of cultural memory by applying a straightjacket or an outright ban to works on ethnic history was seen as a way to dispel the rising tide of emigration, which would become especially strong in the 1970s, but began to spread, in particular, following the late 1950s repatriation of over 18,000 Jews to Poland and their (in the vast majority of cases) subsequent emigration to Israel.<sup>52</sup>

In reality, however, this cultural “awakening” was not the only or the main driving force of the Jewish emigration in the last decades of the Soviet Union. A more potent factor was the glass ceiling facing Jews in society, limiting their educational, social, and professional mobility, especially after 1967. As Mikhail (or Michael, as he later became known) Zand wrote soon after arriving in Israel,

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49 G. S. Nikitina, “Ėkspansiiã Izrailiã v Afriku i neokolonializm,” *Narody Azii i Afriki* 3 (1963): 36–44.

50 V. V. Bol’shakov, “Kritika sionizma v sovetskoï istoriografii,” *Voprosy istorii* 9 (1973): 78–88.

51 A. D. Ėpshtein and S. A. Kozheurov, *Rossiã i Izrail’: trudnyi put’ navstrechu* (Jerusalem and Moscow: Gesharim/Mosty kul’tury, 2011), 29–33.

52 G. Estraikh, “Escape through Poland: Soviet Jewish Emigration in the 1950s,” *Jewish History* 31, no. 3–4 (2018): 291–317.

“every [Soviet] Jew, except the genius, knows there are certain positions he can never occupy and that he cannot hope to rise to the top.”<sup>53</sup> At play were also other non-cultural and often “non-Jewish” factors motivating Jews to leave, most notably the general disillusionment with the Soviet system. In other words, social and economic circumstances had almost nullified the “achievements” of cultural assimilation policies.

In a cruel sense, however, the oppressive policies against studies of Jews and Judaism was not completely ineffective. It certainly had a devastating effect on the state of Jewish studies in the country. In 1987, Igor Krupnik, a leader of the independent Jewish Historical and Ethnographic Commission in Moscow, listed Jewish history and philology among the most neglected areas of study.<sup>54</sup> Apart from semitology, which had a more or less natural intergenerational transfer of knowledge,<sup>55</sup> virtually all branches in the field of studies of Jews and Judaism had to be established anew in the 1990s. The independent, grassroots research groups, which appeared in Moscow and Leningrad in the early 1980s, left little trace in Russian academia, because the majority of their participants, many of them refuseniks, left the country in the late 1980s or in the 1990s and continued their studies in Israel or the United States.<sup>56</sup> As a result, more often than not, Jewish studies in Russia and other post-Soviet states still struggle to this day to put down roots through the layers of wasteland left from the Soviet period.

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53 M. Zand, “A Reply to Mr. Davies,” *The New York Times*, December 6, 1971, 39.

54 I. Krupnik, “The Contribution of the Younger Generation of Soviet Scholars to Jewish Studies in the USSR,” *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 17, no. 2 (1987): 45.

55 I. R. Tantlevskii, “Il’ia Sholeimovich Shifman (1930–1990),” in Il’ia S. Shifman, *Karfagen* (St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg University Press, 2006), 3–6; S. Iakerson, “Ia ostalsia v Leningrade, chtoby stat’ gebraistom’,” in *Sovetskaia iudaika: istoriia, problematika, personalii*, ed. M. Kupovevskii (Jerusalem and Moscow: Gesharim/Mosty kul’tury, 2017), 273–85.

56 I. Krupnik, “Kak my zanimalis’ istorie... i etnografie: K 35-letiiu Evreiskoi istoriko-etnograficheskoi komissii, 1981–1990 gg.,” in *Sovetskaia iudaika: istoriia, problematika, personalii*, ed. M. Kupovevskii (Jerusalem and Moscow: Gesharim/Mosty kul’tury, 2017), 286–360; M. Beizer, “Jewish Studies Underground in Leningrad in the 1980s,” *East European Jewish Studies* 48, no. 1 (2018): 56–77.

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Alan Silberstein

# Sister Rose Thering's Battle against Antisemitism

## Who Was Sister Rose?

Who was this woman often called a “feisty nun?”<sup>1</sup> Sister Rose Thering (1920 – 2006) was a member of the order of Dominican Sisters, who devoted the majority of her long life to the fight against injustice and discrimination, and in particular, antisemitism in the Roman Catholic Church. Her graduate school research on the treatment of minorities, especially the Jews, in Catholic textbooks directly impacted *Nostra Aetate*. This document was the *Declaration of the Second Vatican Council on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions*, promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1965, which removed the pariah label from the Jewish religion in Roman Catholic teaching.

For the next forty years, she worked hard, and effectively, to ensure that church teaching matched the new framework. Working from her base at Seton Hall University, a Roman Catholic school in New Jersey, she brought Jews and Christians to study together. She became a chief proponent of Holocaust education, a battler for Jewish causes, and a proponent for Israel. Perhaps her most lasting contribution was to promote a state education mandate requiring that the lessons of the Holocaust be taught at every grade level in her home state; a requirement which has since been emulated in several of the most populous American states.

Sister Rose was raised in the early twentieth century, in a large, religiously observant German-American Roman Catholic family in Plain, Wisconsin, a small rural town in the Midwest. At a young age, she decided to become a nun, like three of her aunts; and also, a teacher. She selected the Dominicans rather than her aunts' Franciscan order, because this would assure her the opportunity to become a teacher.<sup>2</sup>

Rose Thering entered religious life at age eighteen, in 1938, and took her vows two years later. For the next seventeen years, she worked as a teacher and administrator in Catholic schools in the Midwest. She also earned her mas-

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<sup>1</sup> More correctly, she was a “religious sister,” as her order was non-cloistered.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Sr. R. Thering, “Oral History Interview,” interview by Sr. I. Schmidt O.P., August 5, 1993 (Archives of the Sienna Center, Racine).



ter's degree in education, at the College of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, though her thesis topic gave no hint of her passion for fighting discrimination. Her thesis related to preparing adolescent girls for entering the religious life.

As far as Sister Rose knew, in her youth, she had never met a Jew. She said later that, as a child, she was troubled by what she learned in school about Jews and by the antisemitism she perceived in her own family. And, as a teacher, she was disturbed by the way the approved textbooks described the Jews, both in Jesus' time and in her day.

Non-Jews who resisted the antisemitism of their peers tend to fall into two camps: The first are people whose childhood friendships with Jews made it unthinkable for them to accept antisemitic values. A good example of this is Pope John Paul II, whose childhood and lifelong friendship with Jerzy Kluger contributed to the pope's fierce opposition to antisemitism and his becoming the first pope to visit a synagogue. Another example is Winston Churchill, criticized for being "too fond of the Jews," an attitude attributed by his biographer<sup>3</sup> to childhood friendships with Jews.

The second are Jewish converts to Christianity, who cannot reconcile antisemitic attitudes with their own continued racial identification as Jews. Examples include Msgr. John M. Oesterreicher and Fr. Paul Demann, both of whom became major figures in the life and work of Sister Rose Thering. They were devout Catholics who, for a long time, were devoted to converting other Jews. But, they also deplored the contempt with which Jews were held, arguing that love, not hate, would more likely win them over as converts.

However, Sister Rose does not fit either pattern. In my search to explain Sister Rose's commitment to fighting antisemitism, I can find no motivation stronger than her innate hatred of injustice. She felt that antisemitism was immoral and also illogical. She developed a series of arguments that took complete form in her PhD thesis.

Her order urged her to complete her PhD in education so she could take a leadership role at the Dominican College. In 1957, at age 37, she began her PhD studies at Saint Louis University, one of the oldest Catholic universities in the US, located in St. Louis, Missouri, under Jesuit Father Trafford P. Maher of the Education Department. This university was already involved in projects to promote interreligious understanding. Father Maher was the leader of their Workshops in Human Relations. For Sister Rose's dissertation topic, he recruited her to study how Catholic religious teaching materials present other faith, racial, and national groups. This put her in the right place at the right time to make a

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<sup>3</sup> Author's private discussion with Martin Gilbert, London, August 2006.

major intellectual contribution to a most historic revision, eight years later, in the Catholic Church's views on Jews. Her thesis research was used by the representatives of the American Jewish Committee to convince the Ecumenical Council that the stand of the Catholic Church on the Jews needed to change. Judith Hershcopf Banki of the American Jewish Committee called this timing "providential."<sup>4</sup> She may have been thinking of the Yiddish word, "bashert."

## The American Jewish Committee Textbook Studies

How did the idea of such a textbook study come about? It was proposed by the American Jewish Committee. The AJC was first organized in 1906 to advocate for the defense of Jews in response to pogroms in Kishinev, in the Russian Empire. Their objective was "the protection, the preservation and the extension of the civil and religious rights and privileges of Jews."<sup>5</sup> The AJC and other Jewish groups thought that what was being taught in religious schools was contributing to tension among American citizens. In fact, the first such studies were self-critical reviews of textbooks used in Jewish Schools. In 1935, the Synagogue Council of America reviewed more than 300 Jewish textbooks and recommended that a quarter of them be discontinued. It also called for the inclusion of positive Jewish teaching on Jewish-Gentile relationships in Jewish textbooks.

In 1958, Rabbi Morris N. Kertzer, AJC's Director of Interreligious Affairs, decided to initiate a series of textbook "self-studies" by Jews, Protestants, and Catholics to determine how each group taught their students in America to understand members of other religions. These were to be conducted by scholars, each from their own faith's perspective. While these projects were funded by the AJC, they were meant to be "independent studies, carried out and supervised by faithful adherents of the religion studied."<sup>6</sup> The study of Jewish textbooks was conducted by Dr. Bernard D. Weinryb of Dropsie College, now part of the University of Pennsylvania. It concluded that while the Jewish material tended to make very little mention of non-Jewish groups, almost no negative views were expressed.<sup>7</sup> The Protestant study was supervised by Dr. Bernhard Olson of Yale

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<sup>4</sup> Author's oral interview with Judith Banki, December 21, 2017, Sydney.

<sup>5</sup> "Jews to Help Race. Form Big Organization," *New York Daily Tribune*, November 12, 1906.

<sup>6</sup> J. Banki, "Pivotal Figure: The Woman Behind 'Nostra Aetate,'" *Commonweal Magazine*, June 16, 2006, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/pivotal-figure>.

<sup>7</sup> E. Fisher, "Perspectives: Christian Teaching and Judaism," *SIDIC Periodical* 9, no. 3 (1976): 19.

University and completed in 1960. It found significant anti-Jewish sentiment expressed in the textbooks used by the major denominations of Protestantism to teach their youth.

For the Catholic study, the AJC approached Fr. Maher of Saint Louis University. Father Maher recruited three doctoral candidates to each conduct part of the study. Sister Mary Linus Gleason was assigned an analysis of English literature textbooks used in Catholic parochial schools. Sister Mary Rita Mudd was assigned an analysis of social studies textbooks. And, in 1959, Sister Rose Thering began her study of religion textbooks. Later in life, she told a friend that she knew from her days as a teacher that that was where all the controversial material was to be found.<sup>8</sup>

## The Catholic Religion Textbook Study

Sister Rose entitled her dissertation, “The Potential in Religion Textbooks for Developing a Realistic Self Concept: A Content Analysis.” She argued that

it is in their curriculum materials that religious schools nurture students in the particular faith which such schools are designed to foster. This almost inevitably involves reference to and comparison with other faith and ethnic groups.

The question she wanted to answer is:

Does it necessarily follow that the portrait of such groups—religious, racial, ethnic—will be unfavorable and prejudicial in comparison with the self-portrait?<sup>9</sup>

For inspiration as to the methodology of her study, as well as for the implications, she drew heavily on prior work of a similar nature, completed in 1952 in France by Fr. Demann, whose own book was called *The Teaching of Contempt*, and on the Protestant study being completed at Yale by Bernhard Olson. To ensure that her conclusions would be representative, she identified the most frequently used books in Catholic schools and selected sixty-five volumes (texts and teaching guides) from eight publishers. Some of these books dated back to the 1930s, but many were revised or published in the late 1950s.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Author’s oral interview with Sister Michelle Ollie, Racine, January 4, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Sr. R. M. A. Thering, O.P., “The Potential in Religion Textbooks for Developing a Realistic Self Concept: A Content Analysis” (PhD diss., Saint Louis University, 1961).

She then proceeded to identify every single reference in these books to a religious or racial group, evaluated the references to determine whether they reflected prejudice, and of what kind. Jews were but one of nine categories:

1. Catholic Non-Roman
2. Protestant
3. Jewish
4. Other Non-Christian
5. Non-Catholic in General
6. Negro
7. Other Ethnic
8. International
9. General

She evaluated each reference according to whether it reflected prejudice and the type of portrait painted. And she evaluated whether the portrait, as compared with Roman Catholics, was negative, positive, neutral, or undifferentiated. She encoded these findings into arithmetic scores and compiled the data by publisher. Most importantly, she also provided quotations from the texts and teaching guides to exemplify her classifications. The example quotations of the disparaging comments may have been more compelling than the fairly anodyne statistical scores.

She gave examples of disparaging comments regarding Protestants and others, and of respectful comments regarding Jews. However, she found a preoccupation with Jews and disparaging views dominant.

Based on her analyses and her belief that the disparagement was unwarranted, she made these recommendations to the publishers in her dissertation:

1. Show the continuity of Old and New Testaments.
2. Show Jesus as a Jew with a Jewish mother and, his Apostles and disciples as his Jewish friends.
3. Give a true picture of Judaism in the days of Jesus and stop denigrating present-day Jews.
4. State clearly that the conflict was between Jesus and only some of the Jewish leaders.
5. Avoid identifying "all the Jewish people," then or now, with some of the leaders of the Jews who plotted against Jesus.
6. Refrain from making negative value judgements of the Jewish people.
7. Explain that in the crucifixion, Jesus suffered and died for the salvation of all.
8. Emphasize that nothing in the New Testament authorizes anyone to think that the Jewish people alone are under reprobation or a curse.

She pointed out that all these recommendations fit well within then existing church dogma. She was imploring textbook publishers to be kinder, or as she would put it, more accurate, in their presentation of the Jews.

## How the Jews Got a Place at Vatican II

Were it not for Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, these textbook studies might have been destined for the library and not for the pivotal role they played in history. However, the year that the AJC commissioned these textbook studies, 1958, was the very same year that Pope John XXIII was elected. Because of his age, 76, he was expected by many observers to be a “caretaker.” But he surprised them by announcing his plan to call an ecumenical council to discuss and settle matters of church doctrine and practice.

By “ecumenical,” the pope meant embracing all branches of Christianity, not the panoply of world religions later included. When the new pope “was fielding ideas for the Council, almost none of the bishops and theologians canvassed suggested that the church speak out on the Jews.”<sup>10</sup> However, this new pope did have a history of empathy for Jews. As Bishop Roncalli, while serving as a Vatican diplomat in Turkey and Greece during World War II, he was credited with saving tens of thousands of Jews by issuing baptismal certificates and by interfering with deportations.<sup>11</sup> Pope John also made an important gesture early in his reign by altering the Good Friday prayers to remove a reference to “perfidious (deceitful and untrustworthy) Jews.”<sup>12</sup>

From the beginning of his papacy, Pope John entered into a series of discussions with a French Jewish historian, and former Superintendent of Public Instruction in France, Jules Isaac, who had lost his wife and daughter in the Holocaust. Isaac spoke with the pope at length about both the Holocaust and the harmful consequences of some church teachings. And, reportedly, Isaac was encouraged to make this point by his friend Fr. Demann, who had completed his own textbook study. It is to these discussions that scholars attribute the pope’s decision to expand the scope of the ecumenical council to include the Jews.

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**10** J. Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933–1965* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 240.

**11** Cf. T. L. McDonald, “John XXIII and the Jews,” *The Catholic World Report*, April 3, 2014, <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2014/04/03/john-xxiii-and-the-jews/>.

**12** Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother*, 240.

During the two years before the formal opening of Vatican II, preparation involved the appointment of ten commissions, one of which, the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, would take up the Jewish question. In June, 1960, the pope appointed Cardinal Augustin Bea to head this commission. Cardinal Bea was a German priest and a biblical scholar with some experience in Christian-Jewish dialogue. He reached out to Catholic scholars, to Jewish representatives and also, to American Bishops, whom he knew to be advocates for improving relations with the Jews.

## American Jewish Committee at Vatican II

The AJC, as well as other Jewish organizations, took the announcements in Rome as an opportunity to launch a broad diplomatic approach, with a team of representatives from the US and Europe opening communications with various officials. Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, recently appointed to succeed Kertzer as Director of Interreligious Affairs at the AJC, was among the most active representatives of the Jewish community working to support Cardinal Bea's work. In assembling his team, 36-year-old Rabbi Tanenbaum recognized that his former teacher at the Jewish Theological Seminary, the 54-year-old theologian and philosopher, Rabbi Abraham Heschel, might be an effective liaison with the 80-year-old Cardinal Bea, as both were biblical scholars educated in Germany.<sup>13</sup> Heschel and Bea hit it off and met several times in Rome, Boston, and New York.<sup>14</sup> While Cardinal Bea was sympathetic to what he was being told about the injuries caused by Catholic teaching, he asked for academic papers to support the Jewish position.

For the first paper, Rabbi Tanenbaum turned to Judith Hershcopf Banki who had met with all the textbook scholars. When the request came to prepare a paper for Cardinal Bea, she prepared her own summary of Sister Rose's findings, which the AJC submitted in 1961.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. G. Spruch, *Wide Horizons: Abraham Joshua Heschel, AJC, and the Spirit of Nostra Aetate* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2008), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. D. H. Strober and G. S. Strober, *Confronting Hate: The Untold Story of the Rabbi who Stood up for Human Rights, Racial Justice, and Religious Reconciliation* (New York: Skyhorse, 2019).

<sup>15</sup> It is noteworthy, as pointed out to the author by Fr. John T. Pawlikowski, OSM in an interview on December 27, 2017, that neither woman's name—Rose or Judith—was identified anywhere in this or subsequent submissions to the Vatican. Father Pawlikowski is the author of *Catechetics and Prejudice: How Catholic Teaching Materials View Jews, Protestants and Racial Minorities* (New York: Paulist Press, 1973), which was based on Sister Rose's thesis research.

Banki's paper, "The Image of Jews in Catholic Teaching," made the case that such teaching, "particularly in the United States—is fostering prejudice and hostility."<sup>16</sup> The AJC paper called on the pope to improve

Catholic teaching about Jews and Judaism, by cleansing all Catholic educational and liturgical publications of inaccurate, distorted, slanderous or prejudiced statements about Jews as a group.<sup>17</sup>

Herein, Banki drew heavily on Sister Rose's not-yet-completed dissertation for pedagogical arguments and conclusions about what was being said in religious textbooks. Like Sister Rose's dissertation, Banki's paper appealed to a higher purpose than just sympathy or even justice for the Jews. Where Sister Rose spoke of the importance of mutual respect among the citizens of the American democracy, Banki said that

prejudice against any religious group today inevitably weakens the entire fabric of society, degrades both the haters and the victims, and saps the spiritual strength of all mankind... [and] ... serves only to advance the cause of anti-religious forces.<sup>18</sup>

She acknowledged that antisemitism was not the policy of the church but pointed out that "Catholic religious teaching today contains defamatory misstatements and omissions which may encourage hostility and contempt for Jews."<sup>19</sup> She pointed out many ways in which typical descriptions of Jews in teaching, and preaching, violated church dogma.

She pointed out typical textbook practices:

- Blaming the Jews—all those alive in Jesus' day, as well as in present times, for the crime of deicide: "When they (the Jews) would not heed the Prophets, He sent His only-begotten Son to call them to repentance. Him also they put to death. Because of this fact, they were finally rejected by God and their rights to His Kingdom were given to others."<sup>20</sup>
- Using the term "Jews" pejoratively to present them as "hate ridden, cruel and materialistic"; while in positive statements about the Jews of the Old Testament, the term "Hebrews" or "Israelites" was preferred: "Jesus ... was reject-

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<sup>16</sup> J. H. Banki, "The Image of the Jews in Catholic Teaching: A Memorandum to the Secretariat for Christian Unity," submitted by the American Jewish Committee, issued June 22, 1961, [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/6\\_A3.PDF](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/6_A3.PDF), 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

ed by the leaders of the Jewish people ... because of their material and carnal minds.”<sup>21</sup>

- Unjust or inaccurate comparisons of the Jewish religion with Christianity: “The Jews believed that one should hate an enemy; but Christ taught the opposite.”<sup>22</sup>
- Omissions such as failing to acknowledge the Jewish roots of Christianity or the continuity between the Old and New Testaments: “There can be no doubt that the world must thank the Catholic Church for the Bible.”<sup>23</sup>

The use of extensive quotations from textbooks provided irrefutable proof. These examples were quite powerful. When Cardinal Bea was presented with these examples, he is said to have replied, “through our negative teaching we have promulgated the hatred against Jews, culminating in the Holocaust; and these must go.”<sup>24</sup>

Additional AJC memoranda were submitted in November of that same year: “Anti-Jewish Elements in Catholic Liturgy,”<sup>25</sup> and “On Improving Catholic-Jewish Relations”<sup>26</sup> prepared by Rabbi Heschel.

## Vatican Council II's Four Sessions 1962 – 1965

What happened next is a tale of leadership, diplomacy, and intrigue that cannot be covered here adequately. The Vatican Council met over a four-year period. Formal meetings occurred several weeks each fall. However, important deliberations and negotiations occurred in the interim periods. Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council in October 1962 but died only six months later. His successor, Pope Paul VI, maintained the momentum, opening three more sessions. At the final session in 1965, the council voted to approve four “constitutions” and three “declarations,” one of which was *Nostra Aetate (In Our Time): The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>24</sup> Thering, “Oral History Interview.”

<sup>25</sup> Cf. A. J. Heschel, “Anti-Jewish Elements in Catholic Liturgy,” submitted by the American Jewish Committee, issued November 17, 1961, [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/6\\_A2.PDF](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/6_A2.PDF).

<sup>26</sup> A. J. Heschel, “On Improving Catholic-Jewish Relations,” issued May 22, 1962, [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/6\\_A4.PDF](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/6_A4.PDF).



It is important to realize that the issuance of a statement on the Jews was *not* preordained. In fact, “this statement was the most *contested* matter the bishops faced over four years of deliberations.”<sup>27</sup>

The proposal to issue a resolution on relations with the Jews was introduced in the first session, then subsequently withdrawn. Strong drafts were circulated, then watered down. During the intervening periods, additional papers were submitted. During the three years before the final adjournment in 1965, there was extensive lobbying by Jewish groups, including the AJC, in Rome and with influential bishops in the United States. On the other side, there was pressure from conservative Christian leaders who objected to changing the church’s teaching about the Jews, by Arab leaders who objected politically, and by Christian leaders from Arab countries who feared the repercussions to their own people. Overhanging these deliberations was the moral weight of the Holocaust cast by such events as the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann and, in 1963, the controversial play, *The Deputy*, which portrayed Pope Pius XII as having failed to speak out against the Holocaust. Finally, as the closing session approached, the declaration was reintroduced and expanded to include favorable references to Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and other religions.

Writing with the perspective of the passage of fifty years, Rabbi Noam Marans, one of Rabbi Tanenbaum’s successors at the AJC, assessed the impact thus:

*Nostra Aetate* was a sea change, a Copernican revolution, a Catholic self-reflection in the wake of the Shoah, that launched a new era of Catholic-Jewish relations. It rejected the charge that Jews are collectively guilty of killing Jesus, a charge that facilitated violence directed at Jews for centuries. *Nostra Aetate* prohibited Catholic teachings portraying Jews as accursed. It condemned antisemitism, affirmed Christianity’s Jewish roots and opened a conversation that ultimately led to a Catholic embrace of the eternity of God’s covenant with the Jewish people.<sup>28</sup>

Sister Rose said simply, “In fifteen Latin lines that document ... changed our negative relationship with Jews to a positive one.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Connolly, *From Enemy to Brother*, 240; emphasis added.

<sup>28</sup> N. Marans, “The Vatican Document of December 10, 2015 ‘God’s Gift and Calling’ Builds on *Nostra Aetate*,” John Oesterreicher Memorial Lecture, Seton Hall University, November 3, 2016.

<sup>29</sup> Thering, “Oral History Interview.”

## Turning Policy into Action

With the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*, and a call for “fraternal encounter,” the Catholic Church and the Jewish community established formal liaison committees and other bodies, which continue to this day to serve as forums for interreligious dialogue. In the United States, the Conference of Catholic Bishops, the very same group that issues the imprimatur for the Catholic textbooks, summoned educators and book publishers to a meeting in Washington. They told the publishers that their textbooks had to change and directed them to hire Jewish scholars to review their texts in light of *Nostra Aetate*.<sup>30</sup>

In 1967, the conference issued guidelines,<sup>31</sup> calling for changes to traditional teaching, in a litany, which mirrors quite well the recommendations of Sister Rose and Banki. These guidelines, and subsequent guidelines issued in 1975 and 1985 called for dialogue, avoidance of proselytizing, educational programs at Catholic schools and universities, and joint scholarly enterprises. And, that

School texts, prayer books, and other media should, under competent auspices, be examined in order to remove not only those materials which do not accord with the content and spirit of the Statement (*Nostra Aetate*), but also those which fail to show Judaism's role in salvation history in any positive light.<sup>32</sup>

The conference also established a Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations, to which Sister Rose was invited to serve as an advisor. She continued to serve for twenty years.

Over the decades since Sister Rose conducted her textbook study, there have been several more textbook studies, and these have demonstrated continued progress. One researcher, Philip A. Cunningham said that in 1994, he was

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**30** Cf. Author's oral interview with Fr. John T. Pawlikowski, OSM, December 27, 2017, Chicago, Illinois.

**31** Cf. “Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations,” Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, issued March 1967, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/jewish/upload/Guidelines-for-Catholic-Jewish-Dialogue-1967.pdf>.

**32** “Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations—1985 Revision,” Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, issued 1985, <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/lent/guidelines-for-catholic-jewish-relations.cfm>.

able to chart the dramatic reversals in Catholic teaching about Jews that resulted from *Nostra Aetate* and to which Rose Thering had made such an important contribution. The transformation from the materials ... were truly startling.<sup>33</sup>

## Sister Rose after *Nostra Aetate*

In 1961, what did a newly minted PhD, interested in Christian-Jewish relations find to do in a world that had not yet heard of *Nostra Aetate*? To understand the turns in Sister Rose's life, it is necessary to go back to 1959, to take note of a watershed event that occurred while she was still at Saint Louis University. The university scheduled an "Education Day" to which were invited Catholic school superintendents and book publishers from around the US. The textbook scholars from the three universities, including Sister Rose, presented their methods and their findings.

As Sister Rose began presenting *her* conclusions, an animated discussion began, and she was severely criticized by some of the leaders. One bishop said

Rose Thering said Pope John XXIII inspired her because he took the word "perfidious" out of the prayer we used to pray on Good Friday. But I want Rose Thering to know that he hasn't changed the Gospel, and he never will.<sup>34</sup>

Another called the local bishop to say that a nun was bad-mouthing the church. She was summoned and asked about her research. While he permitted her to continue, he urged her not to publicize her findings: "Don't hang out our dirty laundry in public." "Well," she said later, "I hung it out."<sup>35</sup> The experience was a searing one. Rather than becoming submissive, she became radicalized. She authorized her professor to publish her work under *his* name because "it had to get out."<sup>36</sup> She completed her thesis and received her degree. She determined that Jewish-Christian relations would become her calling, and she expected that it would make her a better Christian.

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33 "In Memory of Sister Rose," Boston College Center for Christian-Jewish Learning, issued 2006, accessed May 19, 2020, [https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research\\_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/news/thering\\_tribute.htm](https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/news/thering_tribute.htm).

34 C. G. Rogers, *Habits of Change: An Oral History of American Nuns* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 159.

35 O. Jacoby, dir., *Sister Rose's Passion*, Documentary Film, 2004.

36 Thering, "Oral History Interview."

She returned to Racine to head the Dominican College's Department of Education, as requested by her community. Two years later, in 1963, while serving in this capacity, Sister Rose traveled to Chicago to attend the National Conference on Religion and Race with representatives of Catholic, Jewish and Protestant organizations. The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., who spoke, called it "the most significant and historic [convention] ever held for attacking racial injustice."<sup>37</sup> There, Sister Rose, Rev. King, and Rabbi Heschel all met each other for the first time. This experience inspired her to find more impactful work. In 1965, she relocated to Chicago to become an activist on the staff of the Catholic Adult Education Center, which was already deeply involved in interracial justice. She added Jewish studies to their agenda, inviting as speakers, scholars who were engaged in cutting edge interreligious work.

## Seton Hall

In 1968, Sister Rose was recruited to New Jersey to join the staff of Seton Hall University's Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies, the first such academic institution in the world. It was founded by Msgr. Oesterreicher, one of the pioneers of inter-religious dialogue. Monsignor Oesterreicher had been a theology advisor to Cardinal Bea during Vatican II and wrote part of *Nostra Aetate*.

Born a Jew in Moravia, then part of Austria, in 1904, he converted to Roman Catholicism and became a priest in 1927. He considered himself simultaneously a Catholic and still a member of the Jewish people. Throughout his life, he was an advocate of Jewish-Catholic reconciliation and fought "antisemitism from a Catholic point of view."<sup>38</sup> He argued that since the roots of Christianity were in Judaism, Christian antisemitism was illogical. Also, he argued that his fellow Jews could more easily be won over to Christianity with kindness than with contempt. He fought and fled the Nazis, first in Austria, then in France; and he finally fled to the United States in 1940. His parents were killed in Theresienstadt and Auschwitz. He was ministering to a congregation in New York City, when in 1953, with the encouragement of a wealthy congregant, he created the institute dedicated to Catholic-Jewish relations in partnership with Seton Hall. At the inaugural lecture, he explained the need:

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<sup>37</sup> S. Pieza, "Rev. King Urges Boycott by Churches to Fight Bias," *Chicago's American*, January 16, 1963.

<sup>38</sup> Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother*, 11.

Today in the United States, and particularly here in the East, such millions as never before of Christians and Jews are living side by side. Should they not know more of one another than what the newspapers provide?<sup>39</sup>

Because of his academic reputation, Cardinal Bea engaged him in the work of the ecumenical council.

At Seton Hall, Sister Rose organized what she and Msgr. Oesterreicher called the “Menorah Studies” program, which brought Catholic School teachers to workshops with Jewish scholars. She befriended Holocaust survivors and made Holocaust education a central theme of the institute. She also began to organize study tours of Israel.

## Israel

To understand Sister Rose’s special relationship with Israel, it is necessary to revisit what was being taught to Catholic school children about Jews and their homeland, as late as 1960, that their just punishment for killing Jesus was to become and remain stateless. “The Jews as a nation refused to accept Christ, and since His time they have been wanderers on the earth without a temple.”<sup>40</sup> Israel was portrayed as illegitimate. When the Declaration on the Jews was being considered at Vatican II, a statement was issued asserting that it was a religious statement and not political. The Vatican did not establish formal diplomatic relations with the State of Israel until 1994.

In 1970, Sister Rose made her first visit to Israel, an event that changed her life. Visiting Yad Vashem, she said, told her, “the story of the results of antisemitism ... brought about by our ‘contempt teaching’ about Jews.”<sup>41</sup> She subsequently led fifty-three more missions of Jews and Christians to Israel. Each was an opportunity to educate Americans of different religions about each other, as well as to build empathy and support for the young country.

When Jewish groups demonstrated on behalf of Israel, she took to the streets with them, as she wished her people had done in the 1930s. Sister Rose was one of the first non-Jewish officers of the influential American Israel Friendship League. And, together with leaders of other Christian sects, she helped to organize

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<sup>39</sup> J. M. Oesterreicher, “Why Judaeo-Christian Studies,” inaugural lecture, The Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies, Seton Hall University, 1954, <https://scholarship.shu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1004&context=oesterreicher>.

<sup>40</sup> Thering, “The Potential in Religion Textbooks,” 177

<sup>41</sup> Thering, “Oral History Interview.”

the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel. Subsequently, she served as its executive director for several years. Sister Rose spoke countless times to Jewish and Christian groups, on the topic, "A Christian Speaks on Israel." Reading through her speeches reveals that she was as passionate a Zionist as any Jew. She said in 1993:

in the process of loving for, and caring for, and rebuilding the ancient wasteland, the Jewish People itself was reborn and eventually, the Nation of Israel emerged! It is now a rightful member of the Family of Nations. It is this State of Israel, legally and morally founded, that is the Homeland of the Jewish People. No U.N. resolution of the General Assembly will ever change this!<sup>42</sup>

Whenever Israel was threatened, Sister Rose used her voice and ever-increasing influence to be heard—in Washington, in the Vatican, and at the UN. Interestingly, one of her targets was Kurt Waldheim when he was Secretary General of the UN. She wrote letters questioning his criticism of Israel in the face of Palestinian terrorism.

Later, in 1986, she took on Waldheim more dramatically. She came to Vienna to protest his inauguration as president of Austria. She and Father David Bossman, then provost of Seton Hall, joined her friend, activist Rabbi Avi Weiss, on a trip to Vienna to protest the inauguration of Waldheim's inauguration as president of Austria. Waldheim was accused of suppressing the record of his German army service as a Wehrmacht officer. Also, he was implicated in the roundup and deportation of Greek Jews to Auschwitz.

Sister Rose said she went "to lend a Christian voice to this protest, because I feel that Christians did not speak out enough during World War II."<sup>43</sup> They joined other peaceful protesters at various locations. While their demonstrations attracted both critics and supporters of Waldheim, she was particularly disheartened by the virulent antisemitic reactions of the local population.

Most shocking to her, however, was her experience at the Vienna airport prior to returning home. She was subjected to a humiliating strip-search by local police, an experience she compared, "in a tiny way," with the humiliation of Jews during the Holocaust: "before I knew it, I was totally nude. For the first time, I know what my Jewish sisters had gone through before they were thrown

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<sup>42</sup> Sr. R. Thering, "Reflections: A Christian Educator's Thoughts for Post Holocaust Education," issued 1992, 19.

<sup>43</sup> Sr. R. Thering and R. A. Weiss, "Dark Memories of Vienna," special interview by S. Birnbaum, *JTA Daily News Bulletin*, July 21, 1986, <https://www.jta.org/1986/07/21/archive/special-interview-dark-memories-of-vienna>.

into the gas chambers.”<sup>44</sup> When she was invited to the Austrian consulate in New York to receive an apology, one of the younger consular officers commented that the Holocaust was never taught in school.

## Commission on Holocaust Education

Sister Rose believed in teaching the lessons of the Holocaust. The State of New Jersey has one of the largest populations of Jews and Holocaust survivors and their descendants in the United States. In 1982, Thomas Kean, then governor of the state, having learned that individual school districts had been developing curricula about the Holocaust, called together a group of survivors, legislators, and educators. His intent was to develop generations of young people sensitized to the baseness and the consequences of bigotry carried out to its logical extremes.

Governor Kean appointed Sister Rose to a new advisory council on Holocaust education to develop curricular material and promote its use statewide. She thought it should be mandatory. For the next twelve years, she worked tirelessly with successive governors and Members of the State Legislature to pass a law, in 1994, mandating that lessons of the Holocaust and genocide be taught in every public school at every grade level. A permanent commission was named to support compliance with the requirement.

The passage of the legislation was helped by Steven Spielberg’s comments in October 1994, when he accepted the Academy Award for his film *Schindler’s List*. These were distributed to every legislator in New Jersey:

There are 350 thousand survivors of the Holocaust alive today. I implore all the educators who are watching this program to, please, do not allow the Holocaust to remain a footnote in history. Please teach this in your schools. There are 350 thousand experts who just want to be useful with the remainder of their lives. Please listen to the words and the echoes and the ghosts. And, please teach this in your schools.<sup>45</sup>

Today, the commission coordinates with thirty-two university centers to ensure that school teachers are well equipped to teach about the Holocaust, in an age-appropriate fashion, as well as about the evils of prejudice and discrimination. Studies have confirmed their deterrent effect on antisemitism, prejudice,

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<sup>44</sup> Interview in the *National Catholic Reporter*, December 1986.

<sup>45</sup> “‘Schindler’s List’ Winning Best Picture,” YouTube video, 4:24, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HKTYX50hQ>.

and hate crimes.<sup>46</sup> Inspired by New Jersey, eighteen more states have passed legal mandates, and others are considering them.

## Sister Rose Thering Fund for Education in Jewish-Christian Studies

In 1975 Seton Hall University created a degree granting program in Jewish-Christian studies. With the passage of the Holocaust Education law, teachers working in public schools and in religious schools of all faiths were encouraged to enroll. Sister Rose asked supporters to raise scholarship funds for these teachers. To date, hundreds of teachers have studied there, taking courses such as “Christian-Jewish Encounter” and “Lessons of the Holocaust.” The fund stands as a living memorial to Sister Rose.

## Legacy and Lessons

Sister Rose never stopped teaching or speaking out. Despite her interest in Jews, she never became a less devout Catholic. In 2001, Sister Rose Thering

finally received long overdue acknowledgement for the role her research had played at the Second Vatican Council, an award from the International Liaison Committee of the Holy See's Commission on Relations with the Jews and the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.<sup>47</sup>

Six months before her death from illness in May 2006, she returned to the community where she had entered religious life seventy years earlier.

What are the lessons one can draw from this unique individual who devoted her life to leaving us a better world than the one she found? What can be done to continue the battle against antisemitism?

- First, to encourage dialogue—formal platforms and programs enable professionals and laypeople to work together on common problems. Not every problem can be solved—especially theological ones. But, working together breeds mutual understanding and respect, allows friendship and trust to de-

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<sup>46</sup> Including B. L. Hadzima, “Prejudice Elimination: An Analysis Of The Effectiveness Of The New Jersey State Mandate To Teach The Holocaust And Genocide” (PhD diss., Seton Hall University, 1999).

<sup>47</sup> Banki, “Pivotal Figure.”



velop, and reduces the gaps between positions. Friends give each other the benefit of the doubt. Formal mechanisms for dialogue created the friendships and trust that enabled Cardinal Bea's project to progress well beyond anyone's wildest expectation. Formal mechanisms that bring religious leaders together today, continue the progress.

- Second, academic rigor. The textbook studies, arduous as they were, provided incontrovertible proof that generations were being taught to hate. They pointed out exactly which concepts, and which descriptions of the other, were at the root of antisemitism. Presented with the facts of what was being taught, and the implications of that teaching on society, church leaders changed dogma as well as how it was communicated.
- Third, use the classroom. People learn to hate in many ways, not all in school. But school is a good place to reverse the process. On occasion, Sister Rose liked to quote the lyrics from Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein's *South Pacific*:

You've got to be taught to hate and fear  
 You've got to be taught from year to year  
 It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear  
 You've got to be carefully taught

You've got to be taught to be afraid  
 Of people whose eyes are oddly made  
 And people whose skin is a diff'rent shade  
 You've got to be carefully taught

You've got to be taught before it's too late  
 Before you are six or seven or eight  
 To hate all the people your relatives hate  
 You've got to be carefully taught.<sup>48</sup>

- Fourth, commit strategically. *Nostra Aetate* would never have come to fruition if organized Judaism had not begun, many years earlier, to work for the rights of Jews by building bridges to religious and government institutions. The pursuit of textbook studies was a brilliant strategy. When those studies began, no one could guess where they would lead. Holocaust education would not be embedded in educational curricula in the United States and elsewhere, if leaders like Sister Rose had not labored for decades to build the institutions to support that objective.
- Finally, *to have courage*—Sister Rose never lost hers!

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<sup>48</sup> R. Rogers and O. Hammerstein, "You've Got to Be Carefully Taught," track 17 on *South Pacific* (Original Broadway Cast Recording), 1958.

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Alvin H. Rosenfeld

## Antisemitism in Today's America

Leonard Dinnerstein's *Antisemitism in America*, published in 1994, remains the most comprehensive and authoritative study of its subject to date. In his book's final sentence, however, Dinnerstein steps out of his role as a reliable guide to the past and ventures a prediction about the future that has proven to be seriously wrong. Antisemitism, he concludes, "has declined in potency and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future."<sup>1</sup> In the years since he formulated this optimistic view, antisemitism in America, far from declining, has been on the rise, as I will aim to demonstrate.

I begin with a personal anecdote. During a lecture visit to Boca Raton, Florida, in January 2017, I attended religious services at one of the city's large synagogues and was surprised to see heavy security outside and inside the building. "What's going on?" I asked a fellow worshipper. "Nothing special," he replied, "having these guys here is just normal these days."

It didn't strike me as normal, especially in America. From visits to synagogues in Europe, I am used to seeing security guards in place—mostly policemen but, in France, sometimes also soldiers. As targets of ongoing threats, Europe's Jews need such protection and have come to rely on it. Why such need exists is clear: Europe has a long history of antisemitism, and, in recent years, it has become resurgent—in many cases, violently so.

European Jews are doing, then, what they can and must do to defend themselves against the threats they face. Some, fearing still worse to come, have left their home countries for residence elsewhere; others are thinking about doing the same. Most remain, but apprehensively, and some have adopted ways to mute their Jewish identities to avert attention from themselves. For instance, they may feel it no longer prudent to wear Jewish skullcaps or other Jewish markers, like jewelry with the Magen David, in public. Some have removed the *mezuzot* (the markers of a Jewish home that contain biblical verses) from their outside doorposts. It's a nervous, edgy way to live, but for many, that's Jewish life in today's Europe.

America, we have longed believed, is different—even exceptional—for being largely free of ongoing, serious anti-Jewish hostility. The great majority of American Jews go about their daily lives without encountering overt antagonism. Unlike Jews over the centuries who often suffered from intolerance and persecu-

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1 L. Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 250.

tion as residents of Christian and Muslim lands, American Jews know that they live in a country that is free and democratic and upholds the values of religious and ethnic pluralism. They enjoy full civil and political rights, have not been subjected to federally imposed restrictive legislation that singles out Jews, and have never faced pogroms or other forms of mass violence, as their European ancestors did.

At the same time, however, social antisemitism is part of the country's history, and in earlier decades, American Jews experienced varying degrees of discrimination and exclusion in employment, residential neighborhoods, universities, resorts, social clubs, and even hospitals. A hard-edged antisemitism, at its most extreme reflecting Nazi views, was at times a prominent part of the public discourse of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, and during these years Jews were frequently accused of disloyalty, economic profiteering, and war-mongering.

Acts of aggression against individual Jews and Jewish institutions have also occurred over the years. Some of these acts have been lethal, but they have been largely episodic and not chronic or continuous. So, while the United States has hardly been free of antisemitism, American Jews, for the most part, have long felt generally accepted, and the great majority are fully integrated in virtually all strata of American life. The Jewish presence in the arts, entertainment, education, business, medicine, science, politics, and other spheres of American life has been prominent and productive for decades. When it comes to having to contend with antisemitism, then, America, in comparison with Europe and parts of the Muslim world, looks far better; and, over the past half-century or more, most Jews have felt secure and at home in this country and have prospered in it.

Recent events, though, have begun to rattle these feelings of safety and belonging. Beginning in early January 2017, and continuing on an almost daily basis for over two months, bomb threats were made against over 150 American Jewish community centers, schools, civil rights agencies, homes for the elderly, and other organizations across thirty-eight states.<sup>2</sup> In this same time frame, several Jewish cemeteries were desecrated; synagogues were attacked; and swastikas were scrawled on Jewish property in numerous places. Believing their communities to be under assault by newly emboldened right-wing activists, many American Jews were unnerved by the rapid surfacing of such hostility. They sensed that America was entering a new and more threatening era, one marked by the emergence of a reenergized antisemitism together with overt forms of in-

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<sup>2</sup> "Bomb Threats to Jewish Institutions in 2017," Anti-Defamation League, issued March 15, 2017, accessed May 18, 2020, <https://www.adl.org/news/article/bomb-threats-to-jewish-institutions-in-2017>.

tolerance, bigotry, and hostility directed against others. While much of their anxiety diminished when the perpetrator of most of the bomb threats turned out to be a troubled Israeli teenager, many nevertheless began to feel that they could no longer take their safety for granted.<sup>3</sup> Aware that anti-Jewish hostility has been on the upsurge globally since the turn of the millennium, Jews everywhere have begun to feel more vulnerable.<sup>4</sup> Would these feelings of unease begin to reshape the lives of American Jews into a more wary and defensive posture? Or would the country's traditions of freedom, tolerance, and respect for pluralism and diverse cultural and religious traditions be resilient enough to allow American Jews to go about their lives more or less normally?

It is still too early to answer these questions clearly, but it is possible to observe certain developments in recent years that have introduced new sources of concern for American Jews. I will devote the remainder of this paper to briefly discussing three prominent areas of American social and political life that seem especially hospitable to today's antisemitism. Each of these needs to be taken seriously in its own right, and the synergy among them is potentially highly destructive. I will also briefly propose some of what needs to be done to counter these troubling developments.

## Terror Attacks and Jews as Targets

Unforeseen at the time when Dinnerstein was writing his book, terrorism and the need to guard against it have become defining features of American life. In the aftermath of the attacks of 9/11/2001, Americans in general are more apprehensive about their security than they had been before. Jews may feel this disquiet more than most, and for several reasons: (1) Jewish populations in the United States are densest on the east coast, where the attacks took place. In the Jihadi imagination, New York City, the country's financial center, is a "Jewish" city; it may have been targeted for that reason, and it is feared that it will be again. (2) At the time of the attacks on New York's World Trade Center, rumors started up that the Israeli Mossad was behind these assaults and that Jews who worked in the Twin Towers had been tipped off ahead of time not to come to work on the

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<sup>3</sup> T. Pileggi, "Jewish Israeli-US Teen Arrested for Phoning in JCC Bomb Threats," *Times of Israel*, March 23, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/jewish-israeli-teen-19-arrested-over-jcc-bomb-threats/>.

<sup>4</sup> For more on the recent upsurge of antisemitic hostility, see A. H. Rosenfeld, ed., *Resurgent Antisemitism: Global Perspectives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), and A. H. Rosenfeld, *Deciphering the New Antisemitism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

day when the planes hit; reasonable people know this story is absurd, but it persists to this day in parts of the Arab world and elsewhere and signals to Jews that, in a time when conspiracy theories about covert Jewish power are in wide circulation, their innocence cannot be taken for granted. (3) A third reason Jews are worried today is that in a number of cities, including Paris, Toulouse, Brussels, and Mumbai, there has been a close link between Jihadi terror attacks in general and the choice of Jews as targets in particular; in the United States itself, attacks against Jews have sometimes been precursors to larger attacks against American institutions, as in the 1990 assassination of Rabbi Meir Kahane by El Sayyid Nosair, two of whose accomplices then participated in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.<sup>5</sup> There have been other incidents of this kind as well, some of them successful, others foiled before they could take place. (4) A final cause of Jewish unrest comes with the recognition that ideological antisemitism, in both its neo-Nazi and Jihadi forms, is one of the motivators for terror attacks against American targets, including American Jews and Jewish institutions.<sup>6</sup>

To illustrate ideological antisemitism as it manifests in Jihadi attacks, I quote from Osama bin Laden's "Letter to the American Public," issued one year after his deadly attacks on 9/11/2001. In his message, bin Laden denounced America as "the worst civilization witnessed by the history of mankind" and singled out the Jews as the source of the country's wickedness: "Your law is the law of the rich and wealthy people ... Behind them stand the Jews, who control your policies, media, and economy." He excoriated America for its support of Israel, whose creation, he declared, "is a crime which must be erased." If America continues to back Israel, he warned, "this will result in more disasters for you ... Do not await anything from us but Jihad."<sup>7</sup>

This notion that America and other countries have "surrendered to the Jews," who are said to control their economies, media, and "all aspects" of their lives, making non-Jews the servants of the Jews, is a prominent feature of today's antisemitism, especially among Jihadis. So, too, is the charge that the Jews are an age-old and still-abiding threat to Islam and that the existence of Israel is an intolerable offense against Muslims. Such ideas are recognizable

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5 For a detailed, clarifying study of these and other such incidents, see Y. Barsky, *Terror Incidents and Attacks against Jews and Israelis in the United States, 1969–2016* (New York: Community Security Services, 2016), <https://jewishspgh.org/app/uploads/2018/09/Terrorist-Attacks-Against-Jews-in-US-1969-2016.pdf>.

6 *Ibid.*, 16–25.

7 "Full text: bin Laden's 'letter to America,'" *Guardian*, November 24, 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/nov/24/theobserver>.

features of a widespread strain of contemporary thinking about Jews that sees them as a sinister, manipulative, and predatory people conspiratorially organized to seize power on a transnational scale. Louis Farrakhan, the leader of the Nation of Islam, has long given voice to these views and made repeated warnings to Jews that the end of their time is near. On May 26, 2018, in a sermon given in Chicago, Farrakhan spoke of “Satanic Jews who have infected the whole world with poison and deceit,” warning his listeners that “the false Jew will lead you to filth and indecency.”<sup>8</sup> And Farrakhan is not alone in spewing such hatred against Jews. More and more, violent threats are being voiced in America by radical Islamic preachers.

In July 2017, for example, at two different mosques in California, prominent imams called from their pulpits for the slaughter of the Jews. One of these preachers, Sheikh Ammar Shahin, of the Islamic Center of Davis, California, included in his prayers an appeal to Allah to put an end to the Jews: “Count them one by one and annihilate them down to the very last one. Do not spare any one of them.”<sup>9</sup> Similar exhortations were voiced by Sheikh Mahmoud Harmoush:

Allah wants us to have jihad in our lives, no matter what and where we are and what is happening ... Oh Allah, destroy them. They are no match for you. Oh Allah, disperse them and rend them asunder. Turn them into booty in the hands of the Muslims.<sup>10</sup>

In December 2017, at the Islamic Center in Jersey City, New Jersey, Sheikh Aymen Elkasaby referred to the Jews as “apes and pigs” and likewise called for them to be destroyed.<sup>11</sup> At about the same time, at an Islamic institute in Houston, Texas, Sheikh Raed Saleh Al-Rousan, invoked a familiar hadith to call for the death of

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**8** Jewish Telegraphic Agency, “Louis Farrakhan Warns against ‘Satanic Jews’ in Chicago Speech,” *Times of Israel*, June 5, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/louis-farrakhan-warns-against-satanic-jews-in-chicago-speech/>.

**9** “More on Imam Ammar Shahin And Islamic Center of Davis, California: Teaching Wahhabi Islam, Hosting Sheikh Who Supports Death Penalty For Homosexuality,” MEMRI, issued August 2, 2017, accessed May 18, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/reports/more-imam-ammar-shahin-and-islamic-center-davis-california-teaching-wahhabi-islam-hosting>.

**10** “California Imam Mahmoud Harmoush Prays for Allah to Destroy the Jews: They Are After Mecca and Medina,” MEMRI, accessed December 21, 2017, <https://www.memri.org/tv/california-sermon-jews-plotting-mecca-medina-allah-wants-jihad/transcript> [no longer accessible].

**11** “Friday Sermon at Jersey City, NJ: Imam Aymen Elkasaby Prays to Be Martyred on the Threshold of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Which Is ‘Under the Feet of the Apes and Pigs’,” MEMRI, accessed December 21, 2017, <https://www.memri.org/tv/antisemitic-sermon-jersey-city-imam-aymen-elkasaby/transcript> [no longer accessible].



Jews.<sup>12</sup> The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) monitors sermons of this kind and has identified others like them. How representative these hate-spewing imams are among those who preach in America's mosques is unknown, but the fact that they are heard at all is enough to make American Jews uneasy about what may lie ahead for them.

It is little wonder, then, that Jews, like others in America, have begun to take elaborate measures to secure their buildings and personnel against future acts of aggression. Shootings, arson attacks, and bombings against Jews and Jewish institutions have already been perpetrated or attempted in recent years by neo-Nazis and Jihadi Muslims.<sup>13</sup> In the current climate, overwrought as it is with the passions that drive these people, other acts of anti-Jewish violence can be expected in the period ahead. In response, a defense organization, Community Security Services, has trained some 4,000 Jewish volunteers to protect synagogues and other Jewish institutions in America.<sup>14</sup>

According to the 2017 report by the Anti-Defamation League, antisemitic incidents in America increased by 57 percent this past year, with almost 2,000 antisemitic events and activities recorded. Antisemitic incidents in schools and on college campuses doubled in 2017, as did such incidents in non-Jewish elementary and high schools.<sup>15</sup>

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**12** "Houston Imam Raed Saleh Al-Rousan: 'Good Tidings'—Muslims Will Kill Jews On Judgment Day; 'Do Not Tell Me That Palestine Is The Country Of The Jewish [People]'," MEMRI, accessed December 21, 2017, <https://www.memri.org/tv/houston-imam-raed-rousan-muslims-kill-jews-palestine/transcript> [no longer accessible].

**13** Cf. Barsky, *Terrorist Incidents and Attacks*.

**14** Cf. J. Dolsten, "This Organization has Trained 4,000 Jewish Volunteers to Keep Synagogues Safe," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA)*, November 6, 2017, <https://www.jta.org/2017/11/06/news-opinion/united-states/this-organization-has-trained-4000-jewish-volunteers-to-keep-synagogues-safe>.

**15** Cf. "Anti-Semitic Incidents Soared in 2017, ADL Says," *Jewish Telegraph Agency (JTA)*, February 26, 2018, [https://www.jta.org/2018/02/26/united-states/anti-semitic-incidents-in-2017-more-than-double-the-us-total-from-2015-adl-says?mpweb=1161-3106-17640&utm\\_source=JTA%20Maropost&utm\\_campaign=JTA&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.jta.org/2018/02/26/united-states/anti-semitic-incidents-in-2017-more-than-double-the-us-total-from-2015-adl-says?mpweb=1161-3106-17640&utm_source=JTA%20Maropost&utm_campaign=JTA&utm_medium=email).

## Campus Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism

Most Americans, it is safe to say, are not antisemites. A recent Pew poll, in fact, reports that Jews are the most admired religious group in the United States.<sup>16</sup> These positive attitudes toward Jews also carry over to American attitudes toward Israel, which are largely favorable (although variables appear when political party affiliations, race, and generational differences are factored in).<sup>17</sup> On the whole, then, both Jews and Israel look good in the eyes of most Americans. Exceptions exist, however, and within segments of the country's African-American communities, gay community, certain liberal churches, and a few labor unions, negative attitudes toward Jews, Judaism, and the Jewish state are evident. In its 2016 platform, for instance, Black Lives Matter, a popular coalition of African-American and other politically active groups on the "progressive" left, denounced Israel as an "apartheid" state and accused it of carrying out a program of "genocide" against Palestinians. A much-publicized "Dyke March" in Chicago on June 24, 2017, initially banned the participation of Jewish women who were identified as "Zionists" and thereby were accused of serving as apologists for Israeli "pinkwashing."<sup>18</sup> In January 2014, the Presbyterian Church USA published an unusually hostile booklet, "Zionism Unsettled," which vilified Israel and denigrated both Zionism and Judaism.<sup>19</sup> (The booklet has since been removed from

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16 Cf. "How Americans Feel About Religious Groups," Pew Research Center, issued July 16, 2014, accessed May 18, 2020, <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/07/16/how-americans-feel-about-religious-groups/>.

17 Cf. L. Saad, "Americans' Views Toward Israel Remain Firmly Positive," *Gallup News*, February 29, 2016, <http://news.gallup.com/poll/189626/americans-views-toward-israel-remain-firmly-positive.aspx>.

18 Cf. "Chicago 'Dyke March' Bans Jewish Pride Flags: 'They Made People Feel Unsafe,'" *Haaretz*, June 26, 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/chicago-dyke-march-bans-jewish-pride-flags-they-made-people-feel-unsafe-1.5488238>.

19 Cf. "ADL Voices Anger Over Presbyterian 'Zionism Unsettled' Study Guide," Anti-Defamation League, issued February 11, 2014, accessed May 18, 2020, <https://www.adl.org/news/press-releases/adl-voices-anger-over-presbyterian-zionism-unsettled-study-guide>. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is another Christian denomination that, as an institution, promotes the boycott of Israel. During a conference promoting "free inquiry and meaningful debate of important political and social debates" at the St. Olaf Institute for Freedom and Community, Mitri Raheb, a Palestinian Lutheran pastor, gave a speech entitled "Religious Diversity, Political Conflict, and the Spirituality of Liberation." In it, he proposed ideas of Christian supersessionism—to great audience acclaim—and cited an American scholar who also promotes the notion that Jews have no legitimate claim to the land of Israel. For more on this speech, see R. Benne, "Political Supersessionism," *First Things*, March 2018, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2018/03/political-supersessionism>.

the Presbyterian Church USA website.) These hostile trends have become especially acute on some American college and university campuses, where anti-Israel sentiments run deep and can provoke words and deeds that are indistinguishable from antisemitism.

America has over 4,000 colleges and universities. The great majority of these are generally free of ongoing anti-Israel and antisemitic activities. At some universities on both the west and east coasts, however, and often at more elite universities, such antagonisms are ongoing and have become a regular part of the campus scene. AMCHA Initiative, an organization that investigates and combats campus antisemitism, carried out a study to determine the prevalence of antisemitic activity and the factors that affect it on more than 100 US campuses with the largest Jewish student populations. They found that on close to half the campuses, students were threatened because of their Jewish identity: they were harassed and intimidated, their places of residence defaced with swastikas and other antisemitic graffiti, the events they organized disrupted and shut down, their participation in campus activities shunned, and more.<sup>20</sup> The political passions that animate these activities are not campus-wide but usually find a voice among some students and student groups such as Students for Justice in Palestine, as well as individual faculty members in certain humanities and social science departments and in some national scholarly organizations.<sup>21</sup> Politically motivated actions of this kind take several forms— most notoriously the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, which rallies people on and off campuses to engage in widespread educational, cultural, and economic boycotts of Israel; encourages divestiture from companies that deal with Israel and from cer-

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**20** Cf. “Report on Antisemitic Activity in 2015 at U.S. Colleges and Universities with the Largest Jewish Undergraduate Populations,” AMCHA Initiative, issued March 2016, accessed May 18, 2020, <https://www.amchainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Antisemitic-Activity-at-U.S.-Colleges-and-Universities-with-Jewish-Populations-2015-Full-Report.pdf>.

**21** See the American Studies Association’s stated position on boycotts of Israeli academic institutions, “Boycott of Israeli Academic Institutions,” issued December 4, 2013, accessed May 18, 2020. <https://www.theasa.net/about/advocacy/resolutions-actions/resolutions/boycott-israeli-academic-institutions>; the American Anthropological Association’s actions regarding the Israel/Palestine conflict, “Letter from President Alisse Waterston: AAA Implements Action on Israel-Palestine,” issued June 24, 2016, accessed May 18, 2020, <https://www.americananthro.org/ParticipateAndAdvocate/AdvocacyDetail.aspx?ItemNumber=20835&navItemNumber=592>; the Critical Ethnic Studies Association’s endorsement of BDS, “Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS),” issued 2013, accessed May 18, 2020, <https://criticalethnicstudies.org/content/bds>; and the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association’s declared support for the boycott of Israeli academic institutions, H. Keinon, “Native American Studies Association Joins Academic Boycott of Israel,” *Jerusalem Post*, December 18, 2013, <https://www.jpost.com/diplomacy-and-politics/native-american-studies-association-joins-academic-boycott-of-israel-335388>.

tain Israeli firms; and seeks to impose political penalties and otherwise bring about sanctions against Israel. Some campuses are also venues for the annual spring hate-fest called Israel Apartheid Week. Other events include anti-Israel “die-ins,” in which students feign victimization by other students pretending to be Israeli soldiers; the construction of fake Israeli check-points and other hostile acts of open-air political theater; courses, lectures, and conferences on Israel and the Middle East that may reflect anti-Israel biases and pursue anti-Israel agendas; efforts to constrain, silence, or disrupt speakers invited to campus who are judged by Israel’s adversaries to be Zionist advocates; and frequently heard “intersectional” arguments that draw ties between Jews, Israelis, and others denounced as “racists,” “white supremacists,” and “oppressors.”

Those who engage in many of these activities tend to justify them on the grounds that they advance the progressive goals of peace, justice, civil rights, and the rights of indigenous and minority peoples while opposing forces that supposedly work against those goals—namely, racism, fascism, imperialism, settler-colonialism, and, of special interest to us, Zionism; and it is Zionism that, in the antisemitic political imagination, incarnates all of the oppressive ideologies just named. Most of this activity is fueled by ill will and is poorly informed about the historical and political complexities of the Israeli-Arab conflict and of Israel itself; yet, on numerous campuses these trends are now well established and are unlikely to disappear anytime soon.

Among the initiatives described above, BDS is the best organized and most dynamic. As a movement that seeks to marginalize and isolate Israel, it is not a new phenomenon, for boycott movements against Israel date back at least to the 1940s. BDS is a continuation and intensification of this trend. It originated in resolutions formulated at the 2001 UN World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa; these resolutions were then taken up in 2004 by the “Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI)” and the 2005 “Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS.” While BDS has diverse supporters, its chief advocates on American campuses include Students for Justice in Palestine, various Muslim student associations, Jewish Voice for Peace, and other groups active on the anti-Israel political left. They claim to stand for non-violent resistance, but their ultimate goals are destructive—foremost, the end of Israel as a sovereign, Jewish-majority state. In the words of Omar Barghouti, co-founder of BDS:

A Jewish state in Palestine in any shape or form cannot but contravene the basic rights of the indigenous Palestinian population and perpetuate a system of racial discrimination that ought to be opposed categorically ... Definitely, most definitely we oppose a Jewish

state in any part of Palestine. No Palestinian, rational Palestinian, will ever accept a Jewish state in Palestine.<sup>22</sup>

Barghouti's words are echoed in countless other statements by BDS advocates, most of whom oppose a two-state solution and do not recognize the legitimacy of the existing State of Israel. Here, for instance, is As'ad AbuKhalil, another spokesman for BDS:

The real aim of BDS is to bring down the state of Israel ... That should be stated as an unambiguous goal. There should not be any equivocation on the subject. Justice and freedom for the Palestinians are incompatible with the existence of the state of Israel.<sup>23</sup>

Those who embrace these views do not see the Jews as a people entitled to the rights of national self-determination, and they discount the validity of any Jewish historical, political, and moral claims to the land. Alone among the world's countries, Israel, as they see it, is undeserving of a future. Through boycotts and other strategies of opposition, advocates of BDS aim to delegitimize and, ultimately, bring about the end of the State of Israel.

In a practical sense, BDS partisans have won almost no victories, for not a single American university to date has followed their calls to divest from companies that deal with Israel. In a propagandistic sense, however, the constant vilification of Israel as a "colonialist," "apartheid," "Nazi" state has no doubt eroded the country's image in the eyes of some people on America's college campuses. Moreover, a politics of delegitimization, carried on and intensified over time, takes on dimensions of dehumanization that can be detrimental to Jewish students and faculty members.

Here are just a few examples of hundreds that might be cited. In March 2016, at Claremont College in California, "Claremont Students for Justice in Palestine" placed mock eviction notices on the doors of dormitory rooms where Jewish students resided. Similar notices appeared in the residence halls of Harvard University, New York University, Scripps College, Pitzer College, and elsewhere.<sup>24</sup> In

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**22** R. Hollander, "Analyzing Palestinian Propaganda on CNN: Rashid Khalidi on 'Fareed Zakaria GPS,'" Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA), issued February 20, 2017, accessed May 18, 2020, <https://www.camera.org/article/analyzing-palestinian-propaganda-on-cnn-rashid-khalidi-on-fareed-zakaria-gps/>.

**23** S. Azani, "Facing the Truth about BDS," *Times of Israel*, June 5, 2015, <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/facing-the-truth-about-bds/>.

**24** Cf. A. D. Sharon, "Campus Eviction Notices are fake, but their anti-Semitism is Real, Experts Say," *Jewish News Service*, June 22, 2014, <https://www.jns.org/campus-eviction-notices-are-fake-but-their-anti-semitism-is-real-experts-say/#.Wj1e3bQ-dsM=>.

February 2017, a student at McGill University recommended in a Twitter post that his fellow students “punch a Zionist today.” When others warned that his call for violence could be directed against Jews indiscriminately, he held his ground, arguing that Jews are not a “legitimate ethnic group.” His campus’s newspaper, the *McGill Daily*, endorsed a policy to ban articles from its pages that “promote a Zionist worldview.”<sup>25</sup> In September 2017, the organizers of a student demonstration at the University of Illinois called “Smashing Fascism: Radical Resistance to White Supremacy” released a statement, in the name of “movements for mass liberation,” in which they expressed disgust at “the unholy union of American fascists, white supremacists, and Zionists.”<sup>26</sup> Add to this aggressive student behavior the presence of faculty members at various universities, including Oberlin College, Rutgers University, the University of California at Berkeley, San Francisco State University, and elsewhere who have unashamedly transmitted hardcore antisemitic messages about Jews and Israel over social media, and the campus scene becomes even more toxic.

Not surprisingly, all of AMCHA Initiative’s studies have found a clear and robust relationship between anti-Zionist expression and acts of anti-Jewish aggression: schools with BDS activity, the presence of anti-Zionist student groups like Students for Justice in Palestine, and faculty who support BDS are three to eight times more likely to show evidence of incidents that target Jewish students for harm, and the stronger the presence of these factors, the more incidents of anti-Jewish hostility are likely to be found.<sup>27</sup>

In short, at numerous universities, the American campus scene has become a venue for chronic anti-Zionist and antisemitic agitation. It’s unlikely to ease up anytime soon.

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<sup>25</sup> For more on the *McGill Daily*’s anti-Zionist views, see “McGill Student Newspaper Under Fire for Refusing to Publish Pro-Israel Op-eds,” *The Tower*, November 17, 2016, <http://www.thetower.org/4174-mcgill-student-newspaper-under-fire-for-refusing-to-publish-pro-israel-op-eds/>. For more on the student’s plea to “Punch a Zionist today,” see “McGill Student Leader Doubles down on ‘Punch a Zionist Today’ Message,” *Times of Israel*, February 13, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/mcgill-student-leader-doubles-down-on-punch-a-zionist-today-message/>.

<sup>26</sup> M. Vadum, “A Smash Zionists Rally at the U of Illinois,” *Frontpage Magazine*, September 8, 2017, <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/267820/smash-zionists-rally-u-illinois-matthew-vadum>.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. AMCHA Initiative, “Report on Antisemitic Activity” and their second report “Antisemitism: At the Epicenter of Campus Intolerance: Antisemitic Activity in 2016 at U.S. Colleges and Universities With the Largest Jewish Undergraduate Populations,” AMCHA Initiative, issued April 2017, accessed May 18, 2020, [https://www.amchainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Antisemitism\\_At-the-Epicenter-of-Campus-Intolerance\\_Report-2016.pdf](https://www.amchainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Antisemitism_At-the-Epicenter-of-Campus-Intolerance_Report-2016.pdf).

## Rise of the Alt-Right, White Nationalism, and Armed Militias in the Trump Era

Shortly after Donald Trump was elected president of the United States, a group of his supporters assembled at the Reagan Building in Washington, DC to celebrate what they saw as a victory for their cause. They were addressed by Richard Spencer, a prominent white nationalist, who called out “Hail Trump! Hail our people! Hail victory!” His words, echoing familiar Nazi chants, were greeted by some in the crowd with stiff-armed salutes right out of the Hitler era.<sup>28</sup> Many Americans were shocked, for they are not used to seeing neo-Nazis gathering for a convention just a few blocks from the White House. Even more startling were subsequent displays of white supremacist and antisemitic fervor, culminating in the infamous rally of neo-Nazis, Klansmen, and others belonging to the hardcore right in Charlottesville, Virginia, on August 12, 2017. Posters that circulated in advance of that rally urged people to come to Charlottesville to help “Unite the right” and “End Jewish influence in America.” Many responded enthusiastically and joined in a much-publicized street demonstration at which the words “Jews will not replace us” were repeatedly shouted out.<sup>29</sup>

One looked on with a deepening sense of dismay, especially considering that these events might not be aberrant, one-off happenings but could herald the revival of re-energized passions on the extreme right. Such feelings and the politics they give rise to have long existed on the margins of American society. Decades ago, for instance, they found expression in Henry Ford’s *The International Jew* and other antisemitic publications. Father Coughlin’s antisemitic radio broadcasts and populist rallies organized by the America Bund and Silver Shirts also gave sanction to antisemitic sentiments. In more recent times, however, such views were regarded as beyond the pale and had no presence in the country’s respectable mainstream.

What, then, explains the surprising appearance this past year of swastika flags, Nazi slogans, and antisemitic chants in the halls and streets of American

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**28** D. Lombroso and Y. Appelbaum, “‘Hail Trump!’: White Nationalists Salute the President-Elect,” *Atlantic*, November 21, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/11/richard-spencer-speech-npi/508379/>.

**29** For more about the origins of numerous neo-Nazi slogans, see D. Neiwert, “Explaining ‘You Will Not Replace Us,’ ‘Blood and Soil,’ ‘Russia is Our Friend,’ and other Catchphrases from Torch-bearing Marchers in Charlottesville,” Southern Poverty Law Center, issued October 10, 2017, accessed January 29, 2021, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/10/10/when-white-nationalists-chant-their-weird-slogans-what-do-they-mean>.

cities, including the nation's capital and a university town closely associated with an icon of America's most hallowed democratic ideals, Thomas Jefferson?

Numerous factors are no doubt involved, but one is the influence of an amorphous, previously obscure movement, the alt-right, most of whose active life until recently took place on the internet and not in the public square. A collection of diverse, counter-cultural types on the reactionary right, the alt-right resists easy definition, but its main ideological thrust is populist and nativist, and its most radical elements include vehement white supremacy and antisemitism. Many of the alt-right's members call for the end of a United States they regard as a "Zionist Occupied Government," which they refer to as "ZOG." They aim to either replace this version of America, which they no longer regard as their country, or carve out of it a racially pure, white ethno-state. They were prominently represented on the streets of Charlottesville, some of them in battle fatigues and armed with heavy weapons. Eric Ward, who has studied the white nationalist movement, finds antisemitism at the core of the group's beliefs and mission. As Ward writes, in the alt-right mind, Jews are seen as "the absolute other, the driving force of white dispossession ... [They] are a different, unassimilable, enemy race and must be exposed, defeated, and ultimately eliminated."<sup>30</sup> Alt-right publications, websites, and popular music give ample evidence that Ward is correct in seeing antisemitism as "the lynchpin of the white nationalist belief system."

How many Americans find this "belief system" appealing is unknown, but the Charlottesville march numbered an estimated five to six-hundred people, including a sizable group of militant types on the extreme left that considers itself "anti-fascist" and came to Charlottesville to oppose the "Unite the Right" rally and to do battle with its organizers.<sup>31</sup> The organizers were an assortment of people on the hard right, some of whom populate Nazi websites like the *Daily Stormer* or belong to a small group that calls itself the "1488ers." The name needs decoding: the number fourteen points to a fourteen-word white supremacist slogan: "We must assure the existence of our people and a future for white children." The numbers 88 are a coded reference to "H," the eighth letter in the al-

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<sup>30</sup> E. K. Ward, "Skin in the Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism," *Political Research Associates*, June 29, 2017, <https://www.politicalresearch.org/2017/06/29/skin-in-the-game-how-antisemitism-animates-white-nationalism/>.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. "Have Hate, Will Travel: the Demographics of Unite the Right," Anti-Defamation League, issued October 8, 2017, accessed May 18, 2020, <https://www.adl.org/blog/have-hate-will-travel-the-demographics-of-unite-the-right>.



phabet, which, when doubled, as in 88, signifies “HH,” or “Heil Hitler.”<sup>32</sup> Once they are understood, the Nazi references leave no doubt about the extreme thinking that inspires those who identify as 1488ers.

The number of people who identify with hard right groups is probably small and, until recently, their influence has been negligible. Some find affiliation with such groups to be a desirable bonding experience. They gain a new sense of belonging in a virtual—and increasingly real—social climate, with its own language, dress code, and rituals. They feel emboldened by the election of Donald Trump, believe they have a friend in the White House, and can now step out of the shadows and proudly make their case to the American public. They favor the president’s America First rhetoric and see some of his daily tweets and other statements as conveying only thinly coded antisemitic sentiments. They also identify with negative views he has expressed about Muslims, Hispanics, African-Americans, and other minorities. They took well to the president’s ambivalent response to the events in Charlottesville: there are “very fine people on both sides,” he said, puzzling and upsetting those who find nothing “very fine” about neo-Nazis and Klansmen. One of the alt-right’s most extreme voices, the former KKK leader and far-right politician David Duke, in fact, publicly thanked the president for his “honesty and courage in tell[ing] the truth about Charlottesville and condemn[ing] the leftist terrorists” who fought against the neo-Nazis, Klansmen, and others on the streets of the Virginia city.<sup>33</sup>

Some in this diverse collection of right-wing activists look favorably upon the ascendancy of Donald Trump to the White House and see him as something like the second coming of Adolf Hitler, hence their fondness for Nazi signs and symbols. Many of the opponents of these groups on the left also look upon Trump in Hitlerian terms, but they denounce him as a racist and antisemite. Debates about President Trump’s personality, politics, and opinions, as well as the degree to which he may be responsible for an increase in racial, religious, and ethnic tensions in America, are intense and ongoing. Whatever else these sharply polarized views of the American president may reveal, they point to a new and troubling moment in America’s social and political life—one in which antisemitism as well as other forms of racial and ethnic bias are far more prominent in the country’s public life than they have been for a number of years.

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<sup>32</sup> B. Palmer, “White Supremacists by the Numbers,” *Slate*, October 29, 2008, [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/explainer/2008/10/white\\_supremacists\\_by\\_the\\_numbers.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/explainer/2008/10/white_supremacists_by_the_numbers.html).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Z. B. Wolf, “Trump’s Defense of the ‘very Fine People’ at Charlottesville White Nationalist March Has David Duke Gushing,” *CNN.com*, August 15, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/08/15/politics/donald-trump-david-duke-charlottesville/index.html>.

The last few months have seen some small white supremacist rallies by groups like *Identity Evropa*, but they have not attracted the numbers of loyalists or displayed the kind of aggressive rhetoric or violent action seen in Charlottesville. In addition, one of the alt-right's principal architects, Stephen Bannon, used his position at Breitbart News to elevate and spread the alt-right's ideological platform. Bannon is neither an antisemite nor a white supremacist, but his strong advocacy of populist and nativist views appealed to people of such leanings. He lost his post at Breitbart in January, however, and before then he also lost his powerbase at the White House where, for a time, he played a key role as chief strategist to Donald Trump. The president fired him in August 2017 and has since derided him as having lost not only his job but also his mind.<sup>34</sup> With Bannon's fall and no doubt also for other reasons, the alt-right's advance into the American mainstream seems, at the moment, to have slowed down, but events can change quickly, and the potential danger that the alt-right represents should not be discounted.<sup>35</sup>

In short, America is in a phase of social, political, and ideological tumult, in which extreme views of many kinds have come prominently to the fore. Antisemitism flourishes in such an unsettled climate, as do other kinds of racial, ethnic, and religious hostility. President Trump's comment on January 10, 2018, against people who are seeking to come to the United States from "shithole countries" in Africa demonstrated how unrestrained racist rhetoric has become in the country's political discourse.<sup>36</sup> In such a time, it may be revolting but it is not surprising to learn that the person running uncontested as the Republican candidate for a Congressional seat in Illinois' third district, Arthur Jones, is an avowed white supremacist, openly declared antisemite, and former leader of the American Nazi party. A notorious denier of Nazi crimes against the Jews, he has called the Holocaust nothing but "an extortion racket" and the "biggest, blackest lie

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**34** Cf. P. Baker and M. Haberman, "Trump Breaks with Bannon, Saying He Has 'Lost His Mind'," *New York Times*, January 3, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/03/us/politics/trump-bannon.html>.

**35** And even now, incidents occur of the most extreme kind. In January 2017, Samuel Woodward, an avowed antisemite and member of an armed neo-Nazi group called *Atomwaffen Division*, was charged with murdering a Jewish college student, Blaze Bernstein. *Atomwaffen* is a small but extreme white nationalist group that openly declares its affinities with Nazism. For more, see *The Forward* and S. Kestenbaum, "What is Atomwaffen Division, The Nazi Group Tied To The Murder Of Blaze Bernstein?" *Haaretz*, February 4, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/what-is-atomwaffen-division-1.5788573>.

**36** Cf. J. Hirschfeld Davis, S. Gay Stolberg, and T. Kaplan, "Trump Alarms Lawmakers With Disparaging Words for Haiti and Africa," *New York Times*, January 11, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/11/us/politics/trump-shithole-countries.html>.

in history.” Jones has run for public office before and attracted few followers and almost no notice. His chances of winning this time in the overwhelmingly Democratic district in which he lives are virtually non-existent, but the fact that he is in the race as the sole Republican candidate for Congress gives his toxic views far greater visibility than they otherwise would have.<sup>37</sup>

Jones is an extreme case but not an isolated one. Freddy Burgos, a member of Virginia’s Republican Party State Committee, has been sidelined by his party for encouraging voters to support Christian candidates over non-Christians. Burgos claims that “nobody loves the Jewish people and Israel more” than he does. He just doesn’t want his fellow Virginians to vote for Jewish representatives.<sup>38</sup> Paul Nehlen, who identifies with the alt-right and, at the time of writing, is the only Republican candidate running in Wisconsin’s Republican primary race, has just been disowned by his political party for disseminating racist and antisemitic messages.<sup>39</sup> Patrick Little, a republican who is challenging Diane Feinstein for a United States Senate seat in California, is a white supremacist and Holocaust denier whose campaign rhetoric includes the statement that he “woke up to the Jewish question and [has] dedicated my political life to exposing these Jews that control our country.” He has denounced Feinstein as a “Zionist bitch,” called the Nazi slaughter of the Jews a “propaganda hoax,” and will work for an America “free from Jews.” He’s also on record as wanting to introduce a death penalty for any American politician who proposes foreign aid to Israel. Despite his extreme views, he has been garnering about 18 percent of likely California voters, according to one poll.<sup>40</sup>

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**37** Cf. L. Sweet and F. Main, “Holocaust Denier Poised to Claim GOP Nomination in Illinois Race for Congress,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, February 6, 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180206143824/https://chicago.suntimes.com/politics/holocaust-denier-arthur-jones-republican-3rd-congressional-district-lipinski-newman/>.

**38** Cf. A. Olivo, “Va. Republicans Move to Dump Controversial Leader over Anti-Semitic Online Post,” *Washington Post*, February 12, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/va-republicans-move-to-dump-controversial-leader-over-anti-semitic-online-post/2018/02/12/acdcb4c0-1011-11e8-8ea1-c1d91fcec3fe\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.afcc57ac3af5](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/va-republicans-move-to-dump-controversial-leader-over-anti-semitic-online-post/2018/02/12/acdcb4c0-1011-11e8-8ea1-c1d91fcec3fe_story.html?utm_term=.afcc57ac3af5).

**39** Cf. “GOP Dumps Candidate Over anti-Semitic Statements,” *Haaretz*, February 14, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/gop-dumps-candidate-over-anti-semitic-statements-1.5822216>. In January 2018, during a guest appearance on former KKK Grand Wizard David Duke’s podcast, Nehlen stated that “Jews control the media,” cf. E. Sullivan, “Twitter Bans GOP Contender For Racist Tweet Targeting Meghan Markle,” *NPR*, February 13, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/02/13/585339969/twitter-bans-gop-contender-for-racist-tweet-targeting-meghan-markle>.

**40** Cf. A. Kaplan Sommer, “The GOP’s ‘Nazi Problem’ Comes to California With anti-Semitic Holocaust Denier Candidate,” *Haaretz*, May 1, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/premium-republican-front-runner-for-california-senate-seat-is-holocaust-denier-1.6040713>.

What is new here is not the persistence of antisemitic passions but their public airing. At their most extreme, a small but increasingly vocal minority of Americans now feel free to declare themselves “Proud to be an Antisemite.” I take these words not from one of Jones’ speeches, although they accurately represent his sentiments, but from a bumper sticker on a car seen driving in the streets of New York. With the appearance of this strain of antisemitic triumphalism, the United States has reached a new low in the nation’s history.

What’s needed in such an environment is for people in positions of leadership in America’s cultural, educational, political, and religious life to speak out against these ugly developments forcefully and unambiguously. But more than words are needed. Countries around the world, including the United States, need to recognize antisemitism as a persistent social pathology and develop much more systematic methods of monitoring it in all of its manifestations. As is, such efforts take place, if at all, inconsistently and, in most places, without reliable results. Scholars need to study anti-Jewish hostilities as seriously and comprehensively as they do anti-Black racism, anti-feminism, homophobia, and other chronic societal ills. As is, only a single university in the United States sponsors a research institute devoted to the study of contemporary antisemitism, and that is my own institute at Indiana University. In addition, careful scrutiny needs to be given to the use of the internet to spread antisemitism and other kinds of hate speech. In whatever ways possible that are consistent with the need to protect free speech, hateful, threatening words against Jews and others, including on social media, need to be discouraged and curtailed. Also, critiques need to be regularly offered of otherwise reputable institutions, such as the United Nations, certain NGOs, and certain churches, labor unions, and universities that help to foster antisemitism, often through wildly disproportionate attacks on Zionism and Israel.

In addition to all of the above, legislation should be instituted to put checks on these problems before they get still worse. This fact was recognized on March 7, 2017, when all 100 members of the United States Senate put forward a strong appeal to the leading law enforcement officials in the Trump administration. They drew explicit attention to the upsurge of antisemitism and called for “swift action” against the rapid and intensifying spread of threats against Jewish community organizations across the country. “This is completely unacceptable and un-American,” the senators wrote.<sup>41</sup> They are right, and if their words are

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<sup>41</sup> L. King, “All 100 Senators Press Trump Administration to Help Communities Fight anti-Semitism,” *USA Today*, March 7, 2017, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2017/03/07/senators-press-trump-administration-help-communities-against-antisemitic-threats/98851406/>.

heeded and practical and effective initiatives are taken to check this hatred, we will all be better off for it. If today's antisemitism grows worse, however, America will no longer be the America we have known.

This dismal prospect calls to mind an especially memorable response to the escalating growth of antisemitism abroad. In January 2015, during some of the worst violence directed against Jews and others in Paris, the French Prime Minister, Manuel Valls, spoke words that bear remembering. Fearing that French Jews, then under attack, might decide to leave the country in large numbers—and over the past ten years, almost 40,000 of them have left for Israel (numbers for those who have migrated to other countries are unavailable)—Valls urged his compatriots not to remain indifferent to the emergence of lethal Jew-hatred in their country. He wanted to awaken their consciences to this peril not only for the sake of the Jews but also for that of the entire country. For, as he put it, “France without Jews is not France.”<sup>42</sup>

Nor can America be America without its Jews. President Trump should know that and, with others, do all that he can to prevent such harm from growing. He need not fear that large numbers of Jews are about to exit American shores. They will not. But if their safety is constantly threatened and they begin to feel that their lives are destined to be harassed and disrupted, they will, for the first time for most, sense that they are living under a state of siege. They will then install more protective fortifications in and around their communal institutions, hire more guards to secure their synagogues, schools, community centers, cemeteries, homes, and businesses, and begin to follow the European model of muting their identities to avoid calling unwanted attention to themselves.

Nothing would be more out of step with the self-confident and generally successful lives that most American Jews have enjoyed until now. But if, in heretofore unexpected and unprecedented ways, antisemitism takes hold more deeply in the United States, Jews will adapt, as European Jews have, by devoting more of their time, energy, and money to shoring up their defenses. They will see such moves into a warier and more protective lifestyle as necessary and, in time, it will become part of American Jewry's own “new normal.”

That is the situation I encountered at the heavily guarded synagogue in Florida and that Jewish friends elsewhere tell me has become more and more part of their own experiences. In fact, though, this new, defensive posture is nothing other than a normalization of the abnormal, a condition that no free and self-respecting people should have to endure.

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<sup>42</sup> “French PM: France without Jews Would Be a Failure,” *Times of Israel*, January 11, 2015, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/french-pm-france-without-jews-would-be-a-failure/>.

## Epilogue

Since the completion of this chapter, developments have taken a turn for the worse for Jews in America, sometimes dramatically so. The country is in an overwrought phase of political tension and social unrest, and, within such a climate, antisemitism tends to escalate. Such a trend was confirmed in May, 2020, when the Anti-Defamation League reported that there were more than 2,100 antisemitic incidents in the United States in 2019, the largest number of such incidents in any year since the ADL began its audits some four decades ago.<sup>43</sup> In some cases, the hostility has become lethal. For instance, on October 27, 2018, a gunman entered the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh shouting “All Jews must die” and shot seventeen people, killing eleven of them. It was the “deadliest attack on Jews in American history.”<sup>44</sup> Six months later, on April 27, 2019, the Chabad synagogue in Poway, California was similarly attacked. Four people were shot, including the rabbi, one fatally.<sup>45</sup> Then on December 10, 2019, two gunmen stormed into a kosher supermarket in Jersey City, New Jersey, and murdered four people. A large bomb, discovered in the assailants’ car after this assault, was intended to blow up a synagogue in a nearby town.<sup>46</sup> Also in December, 2019, a killer entered the home of a rabbi in Monsey, New York during a Chanukah celebration and stabbed and slashed five people with a large knife.

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. “ADL’s Audit of Antisemitic Incidents: 2019 Year in Review,” accessed September 30, 2020, <https://www.adl.org/2019-audit-h>.

<sup>44</sup> “The Decade’s Top 10 Incidents of Hate,” accessed September 30, 2020, <https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/the-decades-top-10-incidents-of-hate>. Cf. also C. Robertson, C. Mele, and S. Tavernise, “11 Killed in Synagogue Massacre; Suspect Charged With 29 Counts,” *New York Times*, October 27, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/27/us/active-shooter-pittsburgh-synagogue-shooting.html>, and J. Maltz, “‘Deadliest Attack on Jewish Community in U.S. History’: Jewish Leaders Lament Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting,” *Haaretz*, October 27, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-jewish-leaders-lament-pittsburgh-shooting-as-deadliest-attack-on-community-1.6595792>.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. J. Wilkens, K. Davis, and T. Figueroa, “One Dead, Three Injured in Poway Synagogue Shooting,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, April 27, 2019, <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/public-safety/story/2019-04-27/reports-of-several-people-shot-at-poway-synagogue>.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. M. Gold, N. Corasaniti, and W. K. Rashbaum, “Jersey City Shooting Updates: 6 Killed, Including an Officer,” *New York Times*, December 10, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/10/nyregion/jersey-city-shooter.html>, and T. Joffre, “Suspects in Jersey City Shooting Attack Had Powerful Bomb in Van,” *Jerusalem Post*, January 14, 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/suspects-in-jersey-city-shooting-attack-had-powerful-bomb-in-van-614091>.

One of them, an elderly man, was hospitalized in critical condition and later died.<sup>47</sup>

These attacks were the most brutal against American Jews in the last two years, but numerous physical assaults on Jews in Brooklyn and elsewhere have also taken place in recent months. Many go unreported or are underreported, but they continue, especially targeting religiously observant Jews. In addition, synagogues, Jewish schools, cemeteries, and other Jewish establishments have been defaced with swastikas and other hateful markings. Anti-Israel passions, often accompanied by aggressive words directed against Jewish students, have been on the increase on some American college and university campuses.<sup>48</sup> Calls for anti-Israel boycotts (BDS) likewise are now a common feature of campus rhetoric, as they are among certain newly emerged political figures. Add to all of the above the dissemination on social media of widespread conspiracy theories implicating Jews in the Corona-virus pandemic<sup>49</sup> and the intensification of racial strife in America, and the picture becomes still more troubled.

In short, American Jewry finds itself in a newly agitated and more threatening situation, one that most have never before experienced and probably did not expect to see in their lifetimes. Like their kindred in European cities, they are establishing greater security measures around Jewish institutions of all kinds and appealing to officials in local and national governmental bodies to take antisemitism seriously and enact effective measures against its escalation. What lies ahead is unpredictable, but if present trends continue, they will undoubtedly have significant impact on the future of Jews, not only in America but around the world.

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. R. Liebson et al., “5 Wounded in Stabbing at Rabbi’s Home in N.Y. Suburb,” *New York Times*, December 28, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/28/nyregion/monsey-synagogue-stabbing-anti-semitic.html>, and A. Paybarah, “Monsey Stabbing: Rabbi Dies Three Months After Hanukkah Attack,” *New York Times*, March 30, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/30/nyregion/rabbi-monsey-attack.html>.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. T. Rossman-Benjamin, “A Survey of Antisemitic Activity and Trends on U.S. Campuses in 2019 and Efforts to Address It (March 2020),” AMCHA Initiative, accessed August 26, 2020, <https://amchainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Kantor-Center-Campus-Antisemitism-US-March2020.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. A. Weiner, “Global Trends in Conspiracy Theories Linking Jews with Coronavirus,” AJC Global Voice, issued May 1, 2020, accessed September 30, 2020, <https://www.ajc.org/news/global-trends-in-conspiracy-theories-linking-jews-with-coronavirus>.

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Haim Fireberg

# Antisemitic Perceptions and Jewish Sense of Belonging

The beginning of 2017 was characterized by a surge of bomb threats to Jewish community centers and synagogues throughout the United States. The count was in the hundreds. “These are regular occurrences now, with a frequency that’s been increased and on a scale that’s been increased,” Elise Jarvis, associate director for law enforcement outreach and communal security at the Anti-Defamation League [ADL], told the Guardian.<sup>1</sup> The Jewish public attitude was that “incidents of hate targeting Jewish Americans have been on the rise since the November election, as have incidents targeting Muslims, Mexicans, black Americans and immigrants. [Even though the ADL still] hesitated to link the recent threats ... to election results.”<sup>2</sup> But many American Jews were panicked and pointed to the extreme right as responsible, although without any proof, because of their support of the newly elected president, Donald Trump.<sup>3</sup>

It was not a secret that the majority of American Jews were supporters of the Democratic Party and were in favor of Hillary Clinton for presidency over Trump.<sup>4</sup> So the burst of threats could only confirm their presumptions that liberal life in the US was fading away under the new administration.<sup>5</sup> An ADL report claimed of a sharp increase in antisemitic violent manifestations—especially of bomb threats and desecration of cemeteries—since Trump was elected in November 2016, apparently proved their fears. But this report was criticized as leaning on unreliable data that only incurred and caused panic about daily antisem-

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1 J. Lartey, “Jewish Community Centers in US Receive nearly 50 Bomb Threats in 2017 so far,” *The Guardian*, February 4, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/04/us-jewish-community-centers-bomb-threats>.

2 Ibid.

3 Cf. E. Strauss, “The JCC Bomb Threats Confirm That Jewish Parents Are Right to Be Afraid,” *Slate*, January 19, 2017, <https://slate.com/human-interest/2017/01/the-jcc-bomb-threats-confirm-that-jewish-parents-are-right-to-be-afraid.html>.

4 Cf. R. Shimoni Stoil, “American Jews Voted 70%–25% in favor of Clinton over Trump, Poll Shows,” *The Times of Israel*, November 10, 2016, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/american-jews-voted-70-25-in-favor-of-clinton-over-trump-poll-shows/>.

5 Cf. M. Smith, “Anonymous Bomb Threats Rattle Jewish Centers Across Eastern U.S.,” *New York Times*, January 9, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/09/us/bomb-threats-jewish-centers.html>.

itic threats among Jews.<sup>6</sup> The American Jewish Committee's (AJC) extensive survey from April 2019 reveals that the vast majority of American Jews feel that antisemitism in the US is in its peak over the last decade, even though most of the participants testified that personally they had not experienced any antisemitic manifestations, neither physically nor online.<sup>7</sup> The Kantor Center, at Tel Aviv University (TAU), which has analyzed antisemitism worldwide over the last twenty-five years, has not identified any major differences in violent antisemitism in the US over the last few years.<sup>8</sup> This kind of paradox should be studied in depth, and I have chosen to do so by analyzing the well-documented European Jewry's experience.

Reviewing antisemitic violent incidents worldwide reveals that the aftermath of Jewish hatred is constantly thriving. Whilst studying and comparing contemporary antisemitism in EU Member States, several peculiarities, almost paradoxes, can be identified. One of them hints that the level of violent antisemitism, as shown by the number of violent incidents, does not necessarily indicate the level of antisemitic sentiment. It could be considered as a necessary condition in defining antisemitism but undoubtedly not a sufficient one. This article analyzes the contradictory factors that influence the understanding of antisemitism by individuals, organizations, and states using the latest empirical evidence available.

In late 2012, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) conducted a survey on antisemitism in eight EU Member States (the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Sweden, Hungary, and Latvia).<sup>9</sup> An extended follow-up survey and research is taking place in 2018, in which thirteen Member States are taking part, including Austria, who did not partici-

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<sup>6</sup> As an expert on violent antisemitism and the researcher in charge in the Kantor Center, TAU, for analyzing antisemitic violence, I have shown that in the five months following the elections, there was no increase in threats or desecration incidents in comparison to the eight previous years of President Obama's administration. Our yearly reports have shown that there were no dramatic changes in violence over the years. Cf. "Annual Reports on Worldwide Antisemitism," Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, last updated 2020, accessed October 28, 2020, [https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/kantor/research/annual\\_reports](https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/kantor/research/annual_reports). In March 2017, it was already clear that the majority of the bomb threats were a hoax.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. "AJC Survey of American Jews on Antisemitism in America," American Jewish Committee, issued October 2019, accessed October 28, 2020, [https://www.ajc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2019-11/2019AntisemitismSurvey-Book\\_11.19.pdf](https://www.ajc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2019-11/2019AntisemitismSurvey-Book_11.19.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> For data, see the Kantor Center's "Annual Reports on Worldwide Antisemitism."

<sup>9</sup> Cf. EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), *Discrimination and Hate Crime against Jews in EU Member States: Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism*, issued November 8, 2013, accessed October 28, 2020, [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2013-discrimination-hate-crime-against-jews-eu-member-states-0\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2013-discrimination-hate-crime-against-jews-eu-member-states-0_en.pdf).

pate in the original survey.<sup>10</sup> The survey reached out to 5,847 Jews, and the results were published in November 2013. Sixty-six percent of the participants declared that antisemitism in their countries is “a big problem” or “a fairly big problem.” The most concerned group to see antisemitism as a huge problem were the Hungarian Jews (90%), and almost neck-and-neck were the French Jews (85%). On the other hand, in the UK (52%) and Latvia (54%), most of the respondents agreed that antisemitism is “not a very big problem” or “not a problem at all.”<sup>11</sup> The survey has shown that the diversity of antisemitic perceptions are not divided along geographic lines.

Although country differences exist, the bigger picture reveals that more than three-quarters (76%) of the overall participants think that antisemitism “has worsened over the past five years in the country where they live.”<sup>12</sup> France and Hungary lead this perception—Hungary with 91% and France with 88%. But also in the UK, where only a minority believed that antisemitism is a real problem, 66% of participants still agreed that the situation has worsened. In Latvia, only 39% claimed so.<sup>13</sup>

In France and Hungary, where according to the FRA survey antisemitism is a considerable problem, the levels of antisemitic violence based on Tel Aviv University [TAU] publications<sup>14</sup> sharply differ. In France, between the years 2009 and 2015, we recorded a yearly average of 142 violent incidents. In Hungary, on the other hand, the seven-year average was around nine incidents only. It seems that violence alone cannot explain the fact that in both countries the sense of insecurity is a major factor in contemporary Jewish life.

In the UK and Latvia, where the Jewish population estimated almost no problems with antisemitism, TAU data reveal an even more astonishing situation: in sharp contrast to Latvia where the recorded average of violent incidents from 2009 until 2015 was only one, the average yearly amount in the UK was 144. The UK infamously holds the European record.

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**10** Cf. EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), “Major EU Antisemitism Survey Planned for 2018,” issued December 13, 2017, accessed October 28, 2020, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2017/major-eu-antisemitism-survey-planned-2018>. The countries covered are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the UK.

**11** FRA, *Discrimination and Hate Crime*, 16.

**12** *Ibid.*

**13** Cf. *ibid.*, 17.

**14** Data on violent antisemitic events is based mostly on the TAU annual analyses that have been published yearly for the last 26 years by the Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry.



Violent antisemitism is not a problem in Latvia and matches the FRA survey results. In Hungary, with a large Jewish population (the third largest in Europe after France and Britain), almost all the targets were Jewish facilities and memorial sites and not human beings. Would it be right to assume that neither the total sum of violent cases in Hungary nor their nature should be considered as an explanation to the outcome of the survey; that is, antisemitism in Hungary is flourishing and is “a big problem”?<sup>15</sup>

The year 2015 presented a new notorious record in murderous antisemitic violence in Europe. Just to mention three: the attack that occurred in Paris on January 9, where an Islamist killed four Jewish shoppers at a kosher supermarket; the attack on the central synagogue in Copenhagen in February where a security guard was murdered and two others were injured by an Islamist gunman; and in Manchester in September, four Jewish boys were brutally beaten and severely injured in an antisemitic attack. Although the state of violent antisemitism in France and the UK has a lot in common, the survey shows that the people in both countries understand the problem differently.

If it is therefore not the extent of violence that generates the same anxiety toward antisemitism, what could France and Hungary—for instance—have in common that makes the Jews there very concerned with “the problem of antisemitism”?

In January 2015, in the wake of the Paris massacres, the French PM, Manuel Valls, recalled the visions of the French Revolution: “The choice was made by the French Revolution in 1789 to recognize Jews as full citizens. To understand what the idea of the republic is about, you have to understand the central role played by the emancipation of the Jews. It is a founding principle.” Valls did not try to defend the current situation in France; on the contrary, he spoke sharp-

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**15** *Antisemitism Worldwide 2014: General Analysis Draft*, ed. D. Porat (Tel Aviv: Kantor Center of the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, 2014), <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/images/kantorfull.pdf>; *Antisemitism Worldwide 2013: General Analysis Draft*, ed. Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism (Tel Aviv: Kantor Center of the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, 2013). In Hungary, 14 violent incidents against Jews were recorded in 2013, and 15 in 2014. In 2013, 116 of violent manifestations were recorded in France; in 47 cases persons had been attacked (41% of the cases). One hundred sixty-four incidents were recorded in 2014, 88 (54%) of them targeted persons. In the UK, 95 violent incidents were recorded in 2013, 63 of which (67%) targeted persons. In 2014, the overall violent incidents were 141, 82 (58%) against persons.

ly and bitterly: “If ... 100,000 Jews leave, France will no longer be France. The French Republic will be judged a failure.”<sup>16</sup>

Although Valls was known for his warm attitudes toward French Jews, his decisive words should also be understood in connection with the continuous emotional erosion that many French Jews have about the being French citizens and practicing open Judaism at the same time. For many, it was only the tip of the iceberg; a process lasting almost a decade in which Jews felt that they are not only under attack by vast groups of radical Muslims, but that the main political groups, primarily from the French Left abandoned them. A popular Jewish opinion is that there is an unholy—although undeclared publicly—alliance between French radical Left and Muslim extremists against a common enemy—the Jewish community in France for an alleged unequivocal support of Israel.<sup>17</sup> When such a connection is being made, even casual criticism of Israeli policy toward a two-state solution becomes antisemitic in nature and involves calls to Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions [BDS] on Israel, while it is illegal according to French law.<sup>18</sup>

Ron Azogui, a member of the Service de Protection de la Communauté Juive [SPCJ] concluded:

Antisemitism in France cannot be considered anymore as a temporary situation associated with the situation in the Middle East; it is a structural problem that has not been fought as such and has not been halted yet. ... Forty percent of racist violence perpetrated in France in 2013 targeted Jews. However, Jews represent less than 1 percent of the French population. ... [We believe] that antisemitic violence has settled and is anchored in society. But the aggravating factor is that French Jews feel isolated in their fight against antisemitism. Aren't the values that are attacked by this scourge are those of a whole nation?<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately, his rhetorical question as well as Valls's remarks are still part of the French Jewish community's common experience.

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16 J. Goldberg, “French Prime Minister: If Jews flee, the Republic Will Be a Failure,” *The Atlantic*, January 10, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/01/french-prime-minister-warns-if-jews-flee-the-republic-will-be-judged-a-failure/384410/>.

17 In 2015, one of the prominent Jewish intellectuals in France, Shmuel Trigano, expressed this view in his publication: *A Journey Through French Anti-Semitism* (Spring, 2015). For online summaries on Trigano's attitudes, see: <https://jewishreviewofbooks.com/articles/1534/a-journey-through-french-anti-semitism/>, accessed October 28, 2020.

18 Cf. J. Y. Camus, “France,” in *Antisemitism Worldwide 2014: General Analysis Draft*, ed. D. Porat (Tel Aviv: Kantor Center of the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, 2014), <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/images/kantorfull.pdf>, 63–66.

19 Stephen Roth Institute, *Antisemitism Worldwide 2013*, 52.

In Hungary, we find that the quest for Hungarian national identity in the twenty-first century, the uncertainty about its common values and the place of minorities, including Jews, in this nation-state are central issues in Hungary's discourse today. Dr. Rafi Vago, the renowned scholar, has thus described the situation there:

deep divisions in Hungarian political life [could be found], between the center-right party *Fidesz* [the ruling party], the extremist right wing party, *Jobbik*, and the liberal-left, over Hungary's past. It ... became a test case for the delicate balance and relationship between various parts of Hungarian society, the media and the political spectrum.<sup>20</sup>

Vago stressed that standing in the center of the conflict was

the need to face the fate of its almost 600,000 Jews who perished in the Holocaust and evaluate the inter-war and war time Horthy regime ... The [recent years] ... became [also] the focal point of strong differences of opinion [about] the rise of antisemitism, and the government's handling of those issues.<sup>21</sup>

Although the number of violent antisemitic incidents in Hungary is relatively small and rare, there are strong feelings among the Jews. "Jews can now feel antisemitism in the streets,"<sup>22</sup> stressed Rabbi Schlomo Koves [Slomo Köves], the executive Rabbi of the Unified Hungarian Congregation. Many consider that the bad atmosphere is the result of the nationalistic discourse, especially the revisionism of Hungary's World War II past:

The main danger in Hungary is the attempt to "whitewash" the anti-semitic past, rehabilitate aspects of the Horthy era, emphasize Hungary's alleged loss of sovereignty in March 1944, with the German occupation, thus as attempt to relativize Hungary's role in the destruction of its Jewry.<sup>23</sup>

It is not a debate that takes place behind closed doors and in academic circles only, but in the media and in public demonstrations as well. A few examples in short:

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<sup>20</sup> R. Vago, "Hungary," in *Antisemitism Worldwide 2014: General Analysis Draft*, ed. D. Porat (Tel Aviv: Kantor Center of the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, 2014), <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/images/kantorfull.pdf>, 54.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Roth Institute, *Antisemitism Worldwide 2013*, 44.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

- In 2014, the government, ruled by *Fidesz*, erected a statue at Freedom Square, showing Germany’s imperial eagle striking down on archangel Gabriel, Hungary’s guardian angel, symbolizing Hungary’s innocence versus Nazi aggression, in commemoration of March 19, 1944, the date of the Nazi occupation of Hungary. Continuing opposition to the statue reflects the attitudes of wide segments of the Hungarian public, not only among Jews, that the statue deflects Hungary’s responsibility for the Holocaust. The leading historian of the Holocaust in Hungary, and Holocaust survivor, Prof. Randolph L. Braham, returned a prestigious state award to the Hungarian government in protest of rewriting Hungary’s history.<sup>24</sup>
- Another source of dispute is the project of the “House of Fates,” a planned educational center and a Holocaust museum in the eighth district, now home to many Jews. It became the focus of ongoing debates claiming that the project’s aims are not clear, that the voice of the Jewish community has not been taken into consideration.<sup>25</sup> Although the dispute has nothing to do with antisemitism per se, and many prominent members of the Jewish community, although not the official ones, are involved in the project, the contemporary opinion among the Jewish leadership in the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities [*Mazsihisz*]<sup>26</sup>—and it is spreading down to the ranks—is of cessation from the government.<sup>26</sup>

The FRA survey has shown many parallels between French Jewry and Hungarian Jewry that support the analysis above. Although France and Hungary differ in their political systems and civic ethos, the willingness of Jewish citizens to emigrate “because of not feeling safe living there as a Jew” in both countries is the highest according to the FRA survey: 48% of Hungarian Jews and 46% of French

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Vago, “Hungary,” 54; R. L. Braham, “Hungary: The Assault on the Historical Memory of the Holocaust,” in *The Holocaust in Hungary: Seventy Years Later*, ed. R. L. Braham and A. Kovacs (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016), 261–310.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. “Budapest Politicians Tour New Holocaust Museum Described as Shocking,” *Hungarian Free Press*, May 7, 2015, <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2015/05/07/budapest-politicians-tour-new-holocaust-museum-described-as-shocking/>; Vago, “Hungary,” 55.

<sup>26</sup> For an update on this controversy, see: “High-ranking Fidesz Leader’s Anti-Semitic Comments Shake the Hungarian Jewish Community,” *Hungarian Spectrum*, issued December 1, 2019, accessed October 28, 2020, <https://hungarianspectrum.org/tag/mazsihisz/>. Another controversy was about the anti-George Soros campaign in Hungary that deepened the gap between the Government and the veteran Jewish establishment headed today by Andras Heisler. Cf. R. Ahren, “Decrying ‘Betrayal,’ Hungary Jews Say Netanyahu Ignoring Them,” *The Times of Israel*, July 20, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/decrying-netanyahu-betrayal-hungary-jews-say-pm-ignoring-them/>.

Jews.<sup>27</sup> The feelings of insecurity led to an increasing disbelief in the future of the community and has weakened the sense belonging to the nation as it would be shown later on. While the two countries differ in the overall number of violent antisemitic incidents, the fear of becoming a victim of threats, insults and verbal harassment—important factors in creating an antisemitic environment—is very similar. Sixty-five percent of Hungarian Jews and seventy-six percent of French Jews were worried of being exposed to these kinds of attacks.

The only actual difference was found when they were asked about their worries of being personally attacked. Seventy-one percent of French Jews answered that they are worried, in comparison to forty-three percent of Hungarian Jews. Indeed, this difference could be explained by their specific experiences.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, Hungary has one unique factor—as 66% of respondents emphasized—which is the vast exposure of individuals to antisemitism in the public sphere, first and foremost, by the eagerness of mainstream politicians to adopt publicly antisemitic attitudes and antisemitic rhetoric, something that almost does not exist in French politics.<sup>29</sup>

On the other side, we have the UK and Latvia. The FRA survey revealed, as was mentioned above, that 52% of UK Jews believe that antisemitism is not, or almost not a problem in Britain. And it is the highest rate among the EU members. The Jewish Policy Research (JPR) concluded in wake of the survey: “[The British Jewish population has] a strong sense of belonging to the UK.”<sup>30</sup> There are several empirical indications that support this assumption, for example, 77% of the respondents declared that they “have not considered emigrating” because of their fear of antisemitism.<sup>31</sup> Knowing that the UK, according to TAU data, has the highest rate of antisemitic violence in Europe, causes one to wonder how is it that only a relatively small proportion of UK respondents to the FRA survey claimed to be worried about being a victim of violence. Thirty-five percent were worried of verbal harassment and twenty-five percent were worried of physical attacks; the smallest rate of all participants in the survey.<sup>32</sup> Even though the

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27 FRA, *Discrimination and Hate Crime*, 37.

28 Cf. *ibid.*, 33.

29 Cf. *ibid.*, 26.

30 M. Whine, “United Kingdom,” in *Antisemitism Worldwide 2014: General Analysis Draft*, ed. D. Porat (Tel Aviv: Kantor Center of the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, 2014), <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/images/kantorfull.pdf>, 71.

31 Cf. FRA, *Discrimination and Hate Crime*, 37.

32 Cf. *ibid.*, 33. It is interesting that when asked about their personal experience, the rate of those who have suffered from violence is climbing to 19%. This is above the percentage of Latvia's respondents (16%) and Italy, with the lowest rate of people who actually suffered from violence (12%).

number of violent antisemitic incidents in Britain is the highest among EU members, the sense of security of the British Jews, and their belief as shown in the survey, of being integrated into the British society, are remarkable.<sup>33</sup>

In comparison to France, a considerably lower rate of respondents claimed to be suffering from antisemitic attitudes in the public sphere or at social events. The survey revealed that UK Jews sense that many in the political establishment—at least when it comes to the Conservative Party and the more moderate representatives of the Labour Party—are standing with them in fighting antisemitism and discrimination.<sup>34</sup>

Concerns and questions have been raised in Britain recently about the future of Jewish existence in the country. The sense of security was diluted in the wake of the murderous antisemitic incidents in 2014 (Brussels), and in 2015 (Paris, Copenhagen, and Manchester), and the hate against the Jews shown in the streets of European capitals during the summer of 2014 and “Operation Protective Edge.” A prominent Londoner lawyer, Hillary Freeman, summarized the popular feelings:

As a Jew, I find this particularly offensive. It’s taking the Holocaust—the greatest tragedy in the history of the Jewish people—and using it as a stick to beat us with. ... I am horrified that my grandma, now 96, might live to see the country that gave her sanctuary over 70 years ago become a place that is no longer safe for Jews. But the terrifying truth is that once the genie of antisemitism has been released from the bottle, it is almost impossible to put it back.<sup>35</sup>

The Paris massacres have sent shock waves throughout the UK’s Jewish society, and its members have been looking for reassurance to their civilian status in the

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**33** My analysis totally objects to Jonathan Boyd’s conclusion that “most European Jewish populations appear to feel a strong sense of belonging to the countries in which they live, and most seem to be able to comfortably manage the relationship between their Jewish and wider national identities. Even in the countries where levels of antisemitism are revealed by these and other data to be highest, Jews feel remarkably attached to the nations in which they live: over 70 per cent of respondents in Hungary feel a strong sense of belonging to Hungary, and over 80 per cent of respondents in France feel a strong sense of belonging to France.” J. Boyd, “Jewish Life in Europe: Impending Catastrophe, or Imminent Renaissance?,” Institute for Jewish Policy Research, issued November 2013, accessed October 28, 2020, <https://archive.jpr.org.uk/download?id=1491>, 12.

**34** Cf. *ibid.*, 26.

**35** H. Freeman, “Why, as a British Jew, I’m Terrified by the Anti-Semitism suddenly Sweeping my Country,” *The Daily Mail*, August 9, 2018, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2720381/Why-British-Jew-I-m-terrified-anti-Semitism-suddenly-sweeping-country.html>.

UK. In 2015, during a meeting with Jewish Leaders, David Cameron, PM, praised the sense of mutual solidarity and belonging that unifies all Britons:

I know that everyone will be very concerned about what happened in Paris and the appalling attacks ... I want to reassure you that we will try and do everything we can to make sure that your organizations are properly engaged with our police and security services right across the board to see if there is anything more we can do to ensure security ... But I think we should use the momentum of those great demonstrations to emphasize what we are in this country: a very successful multi-ethnic, multi-faith democracy.<sup>36</sup>

In November 2017, while celebrating a centenary to the Balfour declaration, Theresa May, stressed that there

can be no excuses for any kind of hatred towards the Jewish people. Criticizing the actions of Israel is never—and can never be—an excuse for questioning Israel’s right to exist, any more than criticizing the actions of Britain could be an excuse for questioning our right to exist.<sup>37</sup>

The Jewish leadership has continuously played down a survey from January 2015, called the “Antisemitism Barometer”—criticizing it for severe methodological faults—which claimed that almost half of UK Jews are now considering emigrating.<sup>38</sup> By doing so, they also preferred to neglect the consequences from the changes of the Labour Party’s leadership, headed by Jeremy Corbyn, its harsh new policies toward Israel, and the antisemitism in the party’s ranks.<sup>39</sup>

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**36** “Jewish Community Leaders Meet with Prime Minister David Cameron,” Jewish Leadership Council, issued January 13, 2015, accessed October 28, 2020, [https://www.thejlc.org/jewish\\_community\\_leaders\\_meet\\_with\\_prime\\_minister\\_david\\_cameron2](https://www.thejlc.org/jewish_community_leaders_meet_with_prime_minister_david_cameron2).

**37** R. Sanchez, “Theresa May Says there Can Be ‘No Excuse’ for Anti-Semitism as she Marks Balfour Centenary with Netanyahu,” *The Telegraph*, November 2, 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/11/02/theresa-may-says-can-no-excuse-anti-semitism-marks-balfour-centenary/>.

**38** Cf. J. Lewis, “Nearly Half of British Jews Say they Have no Future in Europe, Study Finds,” *The Jerusalem Post*, January 14, 2015, <https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Nearly-half-of-British-Jews-says-they-have-no-future-in-Europe-study-finds-387693>; “The Antisemitism Barometer,” Campaign Against Antisemitism, last updated 2019, accessed October 28, 2020, <https://anti-semitism.org/barometer/>.

**39** Cf. A. Borschel-Dan, “British Jews Fight to Regain the Labour Party they once Called ‘Family’,” *The Times of Israel*, November 9, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/british-jews-fight-to-regain-the-labour-party-they-once-called-family/>. For an extensive analysis of the contemporary relations between the British Left and the British Jews, see: D. Hirsh, *Contemporary Left Antisemitism* (Milton: Routledge, 2018); and also D. Rich, “Antisemitism in the Radical Left and the British Labour Party,” *Kantor Center Position Papers*, issued January 2018, accessed October 28,

Jonathan Arkush, the president of the Board of Deputies, has pushed forward the idea of reaching out to the growing Muslim society, offering to tighten the bond of citizenship and integration of British society, in order to fortify again the sense of security among the UK Jewish population. In his words:

I want to meet Muslims and show them that Jews are actually human beings and you can combine being a good Muslim with being a good British citizen and hopefully take them away from being at risk of flirting with jihadi ideas.<sup>40</sup>

Latvia, like Hungary and almost all post-Soviet States, deals mainly with its past in its quest for the future: the quest for a national identity. Violent antisemitism is almost a non-issue in Latvia. Unfortunately for the small community, the adoration of the Latvian Nazi-era SS units and other Nazi collaborators became part of the national discourse of the new Latvia.<sup>41</sup> Even so, a high proportion of the respondents (68%) in the FRA survey showed a high sense of belonging and answered that they have “not considered emigrating.” On the one hand with similarities to Hungary, we see rising nationalism and the eulogizing of their own Nazi past, but on the other hand with similarities to the UK, we see a declaration of trust in their homeland.<sup>42</sup>

The respondents were asked to point to several statements that are “possible contexts for negative statements about Jews.” In almost every possible “context,” the Latvian proportions were the lowest. Every statement that involved public attitudes or politicians’ attitudes against Jews had gotten a low rating; in contradiction to France, Hungary, and even better than the UK’s results.<sup>43</sup> The empirical findings show that what is being considered from the outside as a neo-Nazi and nationalistic debate has not yet converted into antisemitism and has not yet given rise to a new generation of extreme antisemites. One more factor is that the Israeli-Arab conflict, which according to the Latvian respondents has the small-

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2020, [https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/sites/humanities\\_en.tau.ac.il/files/media\\_server/0001/Dave%20Rich%20180128.pdf](https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/sites/humanities_en.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/0001/Dave%20Rich%20180128.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> S. Linde, “New UK Jewish Leader: I Want to Meet Muslims,” *The Jerusalem Post*, June 25, 2015, <https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/New-UK-Jewish-leader-I-want-to-meet-Muslims-407127>.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Stephen Roth Institute, *Antisemitism Worldwide 2013*; I. Cantorovich, “Post-Soviet Region in 2014,” in *Antisemitism Worldwide 2014: General Analysis Draft*, ed. D. Porat (Tel Aviv: Kantor Center of the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, 2014), <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/images/kantorfull.pdf>, 19–20.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. FRA, *Discrimination and Hate Crime*, 37.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *ibid*, 26.



est influence on antisemitic discourse or violence in comparison to France, Hungary, and the UK (14 %, 56 %, 49 %, and 35 % respectively).<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

A few patterns have been found whilst studying and comparing contemporary antisemitism in four EU Member States, two from Western Europe—France and UK—and two from Central and Eastern Europe—Hungary and Latvia.

- The level of violent antisemitism, as is shown by the number of violent incidents, does not necessarily indicate the state of antisemitic perceptions. Generally, it could be a necessary condition in defining an antisemitic atmosphere but undoubtedly not the only one. France and Britain have the highest level of recorded incidents, but their Jewish population's self-perception of antisemitism is almost the opposite. The same could have been indicated in Hungary and Latvia. Both countries have a low level of violent antisemitism, but their perceptions of antisemitism in their countries differ from each other.
- In both countries where respondents have indicated that antisemitism is a severe problem (i.e., France and Hungary), they show either a high ratio of estrangement from the ethos that have been chosen for national identity (Hungary), or demonstrate ongoing dissatisfaction from the state of civic consolidation and express worries about society's disintegration (France). In both Latvia and Britain there is a higher level of confidence in the civic order, especially in Britain, and a strong belief that the British society is on the right path in dealing with the challenges of new antisemitism. But confidence in government and society, or lack of it, is only one part of the sufficient conditions.
- Frustration from the political establishment, from ruling parties, and from the solutions they supply in order to control violent antisemitism, but much more importantly, to supply a common basis for all fractions of society to unite around, are the major factors in adopting harsh perceptions about antisemitism. Without belief in the future of the country, and without confidence that Jews are an important component of its society, Jews feel abandoned. And this lack of confidence is the main sufficient condition in adopting the hard antisemitic atmosphere. In the UK we have shown a high level of cooperation between the authorities and the Jewish community; in Latvia

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 24.

it was not a declared issue but empirically given that no friction was found between the Jews and the government. But in France, though de facto, the authorities are trying their best to confront antisemitism and to find new paths to civic integration, the level of trust toward the political establishment is still very low.<sup>45</sup> Much of the same could still be said about Hungary. There are many similarities here also to the US Jewry experience and the division over the Trump administration.

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<sup>45</sup> K. Bandler, "On my Mind: The Battle for France," *Jerusalem Post*, September 29, 2015, <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/On-my-mind-The-battle-for-France-419428>.

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## **Comprehending Anti-Zionism as a Virulent Form of “New Antisemitism”**



Matthias J. Becker

# The German Left and Israel

## Abstract

Within society and public discourse, antisemitism is still perceived as emanating predominantly from the political Right. However, reactions to the Six-Day War in 1967 demonstrated the fallacy of this assumption. Anti-Zionist attitudes spread in German public discourse, notably among the *New Left*.

Although the Left attempts to distance itself from antisemitism, it nevertheless justifies the reproduction of traditional antisemitic stereotypes (e.g., the greedy Jewish capitalist) and the use of antisemitic metaphors (e.g., *plague of locusts*) through the following two demonizing maneuvers:

One, Israel has been associated since the late 1960s with ideologies that the Left clearly rejects: colonialism and imperialism, oppression, militarism, and chauvinism. The Left has always positioned itself on the side of the weak against the mighty. In the context of the Mideast conflict, this means showing solidarity with the Palestinians. Based on such a perspective, Israel has been continuously blamed as the cruel and mighty oppressor. Leftists have seen Israel as the bridgehead for the United States into the Arab world and partly interpret American support as the expression of the alleged Jewish global power.

Two, parts of the German left have declared Israelis to be the “new Nazis” and compare the Mideast conflict to the Holocaust. Through such demonizing analogies, German atrocities are trivialized and identification with the German in-group takes place. Additionally, when claiming that the Mideast conflict resembles Nazi atrocities, Germans are able to emphasize their sensitivity regarding their own history and, as a result, feel morally superior. This leads to the birth of “honorable antisemitism,”<sup>1</sup> wrapped in anti-Zionist reproaches.

The way in which such distorted perspectives on Israel and the Mideast conflict are uttered depends to a large extent on the motives and the background of the speaker. Whilst the Far Left depicts Israel and Jews as colonialists and imperialists, center-left milieus see themselves as advocates for human rights, eloquently advocating for the secularization of Israel and the abandonment of Zionism. Both groups, however, charge Israel with backward and immoral behavior and give it the status of a pariah.

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1 J. Améry, “Der ehrbare Antisemitismus,” *Werke: Aufsätze zur Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, ed. S. Steiner (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2005 [1969]), 7:131.



Its “rhetorical flexibility”<sup>2</sup> makes this form of hatred toward Israel so attractive to the mainstream society. Speakers distance themselves from conventional forms of antisemitism, emphasizing—based on their ideological position—that it is impossible for them to hold prejudices against Jews. Antisemitism in this form is presented as legitimate criticism of Israel while at the same time, the taboo of criticizing the Jewish state (another antisemitic stereotype) is emphasized. Left Israel-related antisemitism can then be embraced by the mainstream; its social acceptability makes it much more dangerous than the limited appeal of traditional forms of Jew-hatred.

## 1 Introduction

Scholarship and the broad public tend to perceive antisemitism as a constitutive component of a right-wing worldview. Since the 1990s and especially since the Second Intifada (2000), however, antisemitism in the left political sphere has become a de-facto part of the discourse as well. Related discussions in the public, throughout different left groups, but also in academia can be characterized as being highly emotional. The reason for this might be that antisemitism within the leftist worldview still sounds oxymoronic, that is, antisemitism on the left is opposed to the self-conception of left groups.

Since antisemitism on the left must be perceived within the context of anti-Zionism, I will first clarify the latter term. This, in turn, requires the understanding of what left milieus mean when they use the term *Zionism*. The meanings of terms shift throughout history. Only through consideration of the ideological background as well as the historical genesis of these phenomena,<sup>3</sup> current patterns of language use (including their communicative functions) can be understood and classified as being expressions of antisemitism in the left political sphere.<sup>4</sup>

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2 M.W. Kloke, “Kein Frieden mit Israel: Antizionismus in der ‘gebildeten’ Linken,” in *Gebildeter Antisemitismus: Eine Herausforderung für Politik und Zivilgesellschaft*, ed. M. Schwarz-Friesel (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2015), 160.

3 A historical overview will be given in part 3 of this article.

4 The linguistic characteristics will be explored in part 4 of this article.

## 2 Terminology

Wide parts of the Left saw (and still see) Zionism as a reactionary ideology that propagates an “incompatibility between Jews and non-Jews.”<sup>5</sup> Through such an interpretation of Zionism as a backward nationalism, it is perceived as an obstacle for the leftist aspiration of overcoming nation statehood and establishing a classless society.<sup>6</sup> In light of the historical reasons for the emergence of Zionism, such a conception decontextualizes the Zionist movement and relativizes antisemitism.<sup>7</sup>

Anti-Zionism is an ideology that is opposed to the alleged character of Zionism and aims at overcoming the Zionist movement.<sup>8</sup> The hostility toward Israel is placed within the core of the ideology. The elements that constitute anti-Zionism and its historical genesis will be elucidated in part 3 of this article.

Often people (not only) on the left emphasize that there is a difference between anti-Zionism and antisemitism.<sup>9</sup> From a historical perspective, the two

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5 T. Haury, “Der neue Antisemitismusstreit der deutschen Linken,” in *Neuer Antisemitismus? Eine globale Debatte*, ed. D. Rabinovici, U. Speck, and N. Sznajder (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2004), 147.

6 Further on, I will indicate that a left worldview does by no means exclude nationalism and the construction of *per se good peoples* (e.g., standing up against the finance capital). In addition, left-liberal elites repeatedly raise the claim that nationalism in its extreme form has been vanquished in Western Europe and especially in Germany—while Zionism, however, remains to be a relic of nationalist tendencies in Europe’s past (regarding post-national self-images among European elites cf. A. S. Markovits, “Europäischer Antiamerikanismus und Antisemitismus: Immer gegenwärtig, obwohl immer verleugnet,” in *Exklusive Solidarität: Linker Antisemitismus in Deutschland: Vom Idealismus zur Antiglobalisierungsbewegung*, ed. M. Brosch et al. [Berlin: Metropolis, 2007], 241).

7 Zionism has its political roots in the end of the nineteenth century and got a huge reputation with Theodor Herzl’s writing “Der Judenstaat” from 1896. As a reaction to increasing antisemitism, the declared aim of the Zionist movement was the founding or reconstitution of a Jewish national state in Palestine (cf. T. Stein, *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Israelkritik: Antizionismus in der deutschen Linken* [Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011], 28). Relativizing antisemitism among left groups however started even before they dealt out criticism against Zionism (see part 3 of this article).

8 Cf. H. J. Schmidt, *Antizionismus, Israelkritik und “Judenknax”: Antisemitismus in der deutschen Linken nach 1945* (Bonn: Bouvier, 2010), 11.

9 With regards to the definition of antisemitism: “Antisemitism as a mental system of belief and of interpretation of the world has been passed down through the centuries, always adapted to current conditions and correspondingly modified, yet without changes in the underlying conceptual constants, according to which Jews categorically function as THE OTHER. [...] In antisemites’ mentally fixed binary construction of the world, Judaism figures as the ultimate opposite of their own form of existence. Accordingly, Jews, with the imagined characteristics imputed to them,

phenomena are of course not identical, since they originate from different ideological standpoints. A differentiation can therefore be legitimate when looking at an early historical stage. However, considering the genesis as well as current patterns and actualizations of both phenomena, a differentiation does not meet the characteristic of antisemitism, which is to continuously—and in accordance with own values and principles—adapt to present conditions. During long parts of its historical existence as well as in its current shape, anti-Zionism can rather be characterized as a “synonym”<sup>10</sup> of antisemitism:

Anti-Zionism solely superficially appears to be an attitude on its own. In reality, it simply is a new form of latent antisemitism in disguise that in contrast to passed on hostility toward Jews has less a religious but rather a political and economic basis.<sup>11</sup>

Particularly in its goal of destroying the State of Israel, which nowadays is the “most important symbol of Jewish life and survival,”<sup>12</sup> the synonymous, however socially acceptable status of anti-Zionism becomes apparent:

Contemporary anti-Zionism, which rejects or delegitimizes the existence of the Jewish state, functions to a great extent “as a ticket for the traditional hostility toward Jews, and its ultima ratio is the annihilation of Israel.”<sup>13</sup>

According to the characterization of anti-Zionism as a “ticket” for traditional antisemitism, Haury<sup>14</sup> stresses that the anti-imperialism of the Left—that with re-

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embody that which is categorically non-normal and bad. Antisemitism thus signifies exclusion of Jews and Judaism by labeling them as the absolute and total negation of the world order defined as normal.” M. Schwarz-Friesel and J. Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind: The Language of Jew-Hatred in Contemporary Germany* (Boston: University Press of New England, 2017), 18. With regards to the definition of verbal antisemitism: “All linguistic utterances that devalue, stigmatize, discriminate against, and defame Jews *qua* Jews can be considered forms of verbal antisemitism. These are utterances, in other words, that can be coded as stereotypes hostile toward Jews and that are used to transmit resentments.” *Ibid.*, 19).

**10** W. Laqueur, *Gesichter des Antisemitismus: Von den Anfängen bis heute* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2008), 18.

**11** L. Mertens, “Antizionismus: Feindschaft gegen Israel als eine neue Form des Antisemitismus,” in *Antisemitismus in Deutschland: Zur Aktualität eines Vorurteils*, ed. W. Benz (München: DTV, 1995), 89.

**12** Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 145.

**13** L. Rensmann and J. H. Schoeps, eds., *Feindbild Judentum: Antisemitismus in Europa* (Berlin: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2008), 17.

**14** T. Haury, “Die ideologischen Grundlagen des Antizionismus in der Linken” (D-A-S-H, 2005), [http://www.d-a-s-h.org/dossier/07/08\\_grundlagenantizionismus.html](http://www.d-a-s-h.org/dossier/07/08_grundlagenantizionismus.html).

spect to the Mideast (conflict) comes along as anti-Zionism—shows antisemitic patterns:

The anti-imperialist world-view of the New Left was shaped by Manichaeism, personification, conspiracy theory and the opposition to good “peoples” versus the bad finance capital and therefore it was structurally antisemitic [...]<sup>15</sup>

Applying the linguistic approach to the present-day antisemitism, Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz also emphasize that both phenomena must be seen as closely related on the linguistic level. They therefore categorize anti-Zionism as subtype of Israel-related antisemitism respectively of anti-Israelism:<sup>16</sup>

[...] because anti-Israelism and anti-Zionism are often inextricably linked and because usually no linguistic distinction is made, we subsume this variant under anti-Israelism.<sup>17</sup>

Anti-Zionism in large parts of its historical, and almost completely in its present-day shape, is tainted with antisemitic elements. Its purpose is the one of an identity-forming feature, a “cultural code.”<sup>18</sup> This facilitates the affiliation to a particular cultural milieu in which the reproduction of antisemitic stereotypes is the expression of illegitimate attitudes. Through the loop of anti-Zionism, antisemitic stereotypes and other forms of Israel-related antisemitism<sup>19</sup> can be justified and finally can reach the status of what is permissible to say. Related interpretations of global states and processes get reinforced through diverse antiisms<sup>20</sup> that constitute a simplified, “one-dimensional worldview,”<sup>21</sup> to be especially characterized by a distorting dichotomy between *the good* and *the evil*.

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15 Ibid.

16 Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 145. With concerns to the definition of Israel-related antisemitism cf. also EUMC, “Working Definition of Antisemitism” (2004), 229.

17 Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 371.

18 S. Volkov, *Antisemitismus als kultureller Code: Zehn Essays* (München: C.H. Beck, 2000), 83.

19 Cf. EUMC, “Working Definition of Antisemitism.”

20 Next to anti-Zionism, anti-Americanism, anti-capitalism, anti-modernism, anti-militarism as well as anti-imperialism constitute a self-contained model of interpreting the world.

21 Haury, “Die ideologischen Grundlagen.”

### 3 Genesis of Left-wing Antisemitism

Hostility toward Jews among the Left existed even before Israel was founded.<sup>22</sup> Hence, it cannot be limited to the time frame after 1948. Hostility toward Jews is the oldest hatred in human history and has for centuries constituted an integral characteristic of European culture, which could (and still can) be observed among all social groups. Even philosophers of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century such as Voltaire, Kant, and Fichte,<sup>23</sup> as well as leading representatives of the labor movement and theoreticians of socialism such as Karl Marx, expressed antisemitic attitudes.<sup>24</sup> In addition, examples including the early socialists such as Charles Fourier and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Russian anarchists such as Mikhail Bakunin and others, the Stalinist show trials, and the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) of the Weimar Republic may be mentioned.<sup>25</sup> Calls,

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22 Cf. L. Poliakov, *Geschichte des Antisemitismus. Band V: Die Aufklärung und ihre judenfeindliche Tendenz* (Worms: Heintz, 1983); E. Silberner, *Kommunisten zur Judenfrage: Zur Geschichte von Theorie und Praxis des Kommunismus* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1983).

23 Cf. E. Silberner, *Sozialisten zur Judenfrage: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Sozialismus vom Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts bis 1914* (Berlin: Colloquium, 1962), 286; Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 36.

24 Whether Marx was really an antisemite is being thoroughly debated among scholars. It is a fact that he (as well as many other leftists) also criticized antisemitism. T. Stein indicates that “such statements [...] [were] less the reflection of a genuinely left antisemitism from a specifically left-minded model for interpreting the world, but rather, due to macro social structures of prejudice that could also affect left-wing patterns of judgement. A socialist or a person believing in the ideals of Enlightenment was therefore not automatically immune to the adoption of anti-Jewish prejudices,” Stein, *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Israelkritik*, 81; cf. also H. Brunkhorst, “Die falsch gestellte Frage: War Marx Antisemit?” *Blätter* 8 (2014): 110–18, <https://www.blaetter.de/archiv/jahrgaenge/2014/august/die-falsch-gestellte-frage>. For antisemitism on the Left at that time cf. inter alia Silberner, *Sozialisten zur Judenfrage*, 137; M.W. Kloke, *Israel und die deutsche Linke: Zur Geschichte eines schwierigen Verhältnisses* (Frankfurt: Haag und Herchen, 1994), 30; T. Haury, *Antisemitismus von links: Kommunistische Ideologie, Nationalismus und Antizionismus in der frühen DDR* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2002), 160.

25 Cf. Silberner, *Sozialisten zur Judenfrage*, and *Kommunisten zur Judenfrage*; Poliakov, *Geschichte des Antisemitismus*; M. Kessler, *Antisemitismus, Zionismus und Sozialismus: Arbeiterbewegung und jüdische Frage im 20. Jahrhundert* (Mainz: Decaton, 1994); O. Kistenmacher, “Vom ‘Judas’ zum ‘Judenkapital’: Antisemitische Denkformen in der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands der Weimarer Republik, 1918–1933,” in *Exklusive Solidarität: Linker Antisemitismus in Deutschland. Vom Idealismus zur Antiglobalisierungsbewegung*, ed. M. Brosch et al. (Berlin: Metropol, 2007), and *ibid.*, *Arbeit und “jüdisches Kapital”: Antisemitische Aussagen in der KPD-Tageszeitung “Die Rote Fahne” während der Weimarer Republik* (Bremen: edition lumière, 2016); K. Holz, *Nationaler Antisemitismus: Wissenssoziologie einer Weltanschauung* (Hamburg: Hambur-

particularly the one from central committee (ZK) member, Ruth Fischer, in 1923, to resist the “capitalist Jews” by “hanging” them on lanterns and “trampling”<sup>26</sup> them, demonstrate the explicit nature with which antisemitism was expressed in left milieus at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The term *anti-Zionism* is originally disconnected from such forms of left-wing antisemitism. It can be found, amongst others, in Jewish minorities and illustrates the—by no means uniform, very heterogeneous, and widespread—attitude of many European Jews regarding the pursuit of a Jewish homeland. The Jews who represented principles of emancipation and assimilation in their respective European civil societies were opposed to this pursuit in particular.<sup>27</sup> In Germany, it was the liberal *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* (*Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith*) that sought to enforce civic as well as equal rights for Jews, emphasize the loyalty of German Jews toward Germany, and strengthen the Jewish self-confidence. The *Centralverein* rejected the Zionist belief in a Jewish nation with its own history, culture, and future. Also, orthodox Jews opposed Zionism as it demanded the return to the holy land of Israel before the arrival of the Messiah. The *Allgemeiner Jüdischer Arbeiterbund* (*General Jewish Labour Bund in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia*, generally called *The Bund*) in East Europe was the most prominent anti-Zionist movement of the Jewish left—here, Zionism was rejected as bourgeois and therefore reactionary Jewish nationalism.<sup>28</sup>

The rejection of Zionism represented a dominant attitude also in non-Jewish leftist groups. Here, Zionism was characterized as backward and competing with the socialist movement. However, the rejection of Jewish nationalism had its basis in a constant underestimation of antisemitism and hatred of Jews was meant to be eliminated in the course of the planned revolution in any event.<sup>29</sup>

Anti-Zionism *before* Auschwitz must be distinguished from the Marxist-Leninist anti-Zionism of the late Stalinism.<sup>30</sup> The latter is based on an anti-imperia-

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ger Edition, 2010); J. Gerber, *Ein Prozess in Prag: Das Volk gegen Rudolf Slánský und Genossen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016).

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in N. Müller and O. Maruszyk, *Marxistische Faschismusanalysen als Zeitdiagnose: Zur unterschiedlichen Rezeption des Nationalsozialismus* (München: AVM Akademische Verlagsgemeinschaft, 2014), 27.

<sup>27</sup> Volkov, *Antisemitismus als kultureller Code*, 77.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Kessler, *Antisemitismus, Zionismus und Sozialismus*, 92; Stein, *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Israelkritik*, 28.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. P. Ullrich, *Die Linke, Israel und Palästina: Nahostdiskurse in Großbritannien und Deutschland* (Berlin: Dietz, 2008), 84.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Stein, *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Israelkritik*, 29.

list worldview and arose mainly in the realm of power of Stalin's Soviet Union.<sup>31</sup> It represents a continuation of an anti-Zionist bias that characterized the relation of certain parts of the Left with concerns for Judaism, even before the Middle East conflict erupted. This emerging anti-Zionism exhibited a structural, contextual, and functional proximity with antisemitic views (not least through the reproduction of stereotypes), even though mostly lacking an otherwise "traditional," racist component<sup>32</sup>—conceptually, this "anti-Zionism after Auschwitz"<sup>33</sup> considered itself to be antifascist and, thus, had to avoid any antisemitic connotation. From then on, this early form of anti-Zionism has had an impact on other left-wing groups outside of the Soviet Union.

In the German Democratic Republic (DDR) that defined itself as antifascist and anti-imperialist, anti-Zionism was part of the state-approved propaganda.<sup>34</sup> Israel was characterized as a "spearhead of the imperialist camp,"<sup>35</sup> Zionism as an "'anomaly' of capitalist imperialism,"<sup>36</sup> as a devastating demon as well as the case example of colonialism. This led to a socially acceptable anti-Zionist outlook, which was in accordance with then hegemonic perceptions in society. The anti-Zionist propaganda was steadily fed with antisemitic content, especially after the Six-Day War in 1967. It received a special place in an ideology that equated Zionism not only with nationalism but also with economic expansionism.

By construing the State of Israel as regional henchman of US imperialism, the alleged symbiosis of these two states could be presented as the root of all evil. Allegations such as "global conspiracy of [...] Wall street capitalists" as

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31 This Marxist-Leninist anti-imperialism is an ideological element of Marxism stemming from Lenin that also reached the Left in Germany in a rather dogmatic manifestation. It has to be distinguished from anti-imperialism in a broader sense that rejects all forms of occupation and colonialism (cf. Ullrich, *Die Linke, Israel und Palästina*, 42; Stein, *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Israelkritik*, 29; S. Salzborn, *Kampf der Ideen: Die Geschichte politischer Theorien im Kontext* [Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2017]).

32 Cf. Haury, *Antisemitismus von links*, 429.

33 Stein, *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Israelkritik*, 29.

34 Cf. A. Timm, *Hammer, Zirkel, Davidstern: Das gestörte Verhältnis der DDR zu Zionismus und Staat Israel* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1997); Haury, *Antisemitismus von links*; M.W. Kloke, "Antisemitismus in der Linkspartei: 'DIE LINKE hat ein Problem mit Antisemitinnen und Antisemiten'," in *Antisemitismus in deutschen Parteien*, ed. D. Ionescu and S. Salzborn (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2014), 153–90; J. Herf, *Undeclared Wars with Israel: East Germany and the West German Far Left, 1967–1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); S. Meining, "Zwischen Nichtbeziehung, Feindschaft und später Annäherung: die Deutsche Demokratische Republik und Israel," in *Deutschland, die Juden und der Staat Israel: Eine politische Bestandsaufnahme*, ed. O. Glöckner and J. H. Schoeps (Hildesheim: Olms, 2016).

35 Kloke, "Antisemitismus in der Linkspartei," 154.

36 Mertens, "Antizionismus: Feindschaft gegen Israel," 89.

well as a dichotomization between “working nations” and “financial hyenas and parasites”<sup>37</sup> not only confirmed antisemitic stereotypes but also raised the persuasive potential of such demonization. In this worldview, Jews and/or Zionists served as scapegoats—albeit the GDR actually strove to overcome discrimination toward humans based on their affiliation with a certain group.<sup>38</sup> With the aid of such rhetorical constructions, a collective identity was to be created and the new ruling system was thereby justified—the latter being necessary in the face of the countless problems that occurred during the formation of socialism. In addition, the obsessive comparison between Zionism and National Socialism can be classified as exonerative antisemitism, fulfilling the need for relief and exculpation from Nazi crimes.<sup>39</sup>

The vast majority of the West German left,<sup>40</sup> however, can be characterized as pro-Israel, partly even philosemitic, during the 1950s to the mid-1960s. Such attitudes can be partially explained by the knowledge and the shame regarding the Shoah.<sup>41</sup> Strong enthusiasm for the progressive pioneer state with its socialist kibbutzim existed both within the social democratic as well as the Christian left.<sup>42</sup> This promptly changed with the Six-Day War in 1967, triggering an exhaus-

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37 Haury, *Antisemitismus von links*, 429.

38 Cf. Kloke, “Antisemitismus in der Linkspartei,” 154.

39 Cf. *ibid.*; cf. also Mertens, “Antizionismus: Feindschaft gegen Israel,” 93.

40 Regarding the genesis of antisemitism among the West German left, see specifically the comprehensive studies by Kloke, *Israel und die deutsche Linke*, and L. Rensmann, *Demokratie und Judenbild: Antisemitismus in der politischen Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004).

41 Cf. D. Cesarani, *The Left and the Jews: The Jews and the Left* (London: Labour Friends of Israel, 2004), 63; Haury, “Der neue Antisemitismusstreit der deutschen Linken,” 144; C. Globisch, *Radikaler Antisemitismus: Inklusions- und Exklusionssemantiken von links und rechts in Deutschland* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2013), 43.

42 Cf. Cesarani, *The Left and the Jews*; M.W. Kloke, “Zum Antisemitismus in der deutschen Linken,” *Jüdisches Forum für Demokratie und gegen Antisemitismus*, 2017, <https://jfda.de/blog/2017/09/18/zum-antisemitismus-in-der-deutschen-linken>. The federal German *Communist Party of Germany* (KPD) showed a temporary rapprochement toward Israel. Yet, this already changed during the Suez crisis in 1956 that was followed by an anti-Zionist smear campaign (cf. J. Edmunds, “The Left’s Views on Israel: From the Establishment of the Jewish State to the Intifada” [PhD diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 1997], 2; J.-Y. Camus, “The French Left and Political Islam: Secularism versus the Temptation of an Alliance,” *Engage*, 3 [2006], <https://engageonline.wordpress.com/2015/11/04/the-french-left-and-political-islam-secularism-versus-the-temptation-of-an-alliance-jean-yves-camus-engage-journal-issue-3-september-2006>). However, it did not share the same quality of hatred toward Israel as East European and especially Soviet anti-Zionism (cf. R. S. Wistrich, “Left-Wing Anti-Zionism in Western Societies,” in *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism in the Contemporary World* [London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990], 49).



tive erosion of solidarity among the leftist groups, who now considered themselves as *anti-imperialist*.<sup>43</sup> The fact that Israel could preventively defend itself against an imminent attack from the Arab states represented a “sin”<sup>44</sup> within “the leftist logic of categorical solidarity with the victims.”<sup>45</sup> Moreover, conservative milieus increasingly expressed sympathy with Israel, and this led to a change of thinking among the leftist groups.<sup>46</sup>

The (more and more antisemitic) ideology of anti-Zionism (in connection with anti-Americanism) represented a completely natural component for the arising New Left<sup>47</sup> during the 1970s up until the end of the 1980s in West Germany. Israel, the concept of the enemy, became the nexus that brought a “political-ideological closing of ranks”<sup>48</sup> for the disunited left.

Ever since, it is of particular concern for the Left to demonstrate solidarity with the Palestinians and to support the fight of the *Palestine Liberation Organization* (PLO) against Israel.<sup>49</sup> Introduced by the *Socialist German Student Federation* (SDS),<sup>50</sup> the *Extra-Parliamentary Opposition* (APO), the civil rights movement and the 1968 movement, leftist groups established many Palestine Committees from the 1970s onwards. Unlike traditionally left movements, these leftists put their hopes of overthrowing capitalist systems in the so-called national liberation movements in the “Third World,” that is, in Africa, Asia, South America, and primarily in the Middle East. The focus on these non-European movements served as identification objects and allowed an unambiguous and therefore persuasive dichotomization between the rulers and the ruled—a reduced perception of political and economic processes that stressed their worldview. After the unsuccessful attempt by the APO to trigger revolutionary impulses in West Germany, this was a crucial step toward self-legitimization.<sup>51</sup>

In accordance with a fraternization with, as well as pure romanticization of, *fighting peoples* as well as by “applying the anti-imperialist scheme to the [Mid-

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43 Cf. Haury, *Antisemitismus von links*.

44 Kloke, “Kein Frieden mit Israel,” 161.

45 Globisch, *Radikaler Antisemitismus*, 44.

46 Cf. Kloke, *Israel und die deutsche Linke*, 183.

47 The New Left was constituted by the *Socialist German Student Federation* (SDS), the *Extra-Parliamentary Opposition* (APO), the subsequently following or seceding groups (comprising also the Maoist K-Groups), the *Urban Guerilleros* as well as the emerging ecological movement and the political party *The Greens*.

48 Rensmann, *Demokratie und Judenbild*, 299.

49 Cf. Kloke, *Israel und die deutsche Linke*, 106.

50 The SDS was the 1961-founded hotbed of the New Left, which was the first to dissociate itself from the Socialist-Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) drifting to the Right.

51 Cf. Haury, “Die ideologischen Grundlagen.”

dle East] conflict,”<sup>52</sup> Israel was demonized and delegitimized in numerous left-wing publications,<sup>53</sup> claiming that it is a “Zionist aggressor state,” a “bridgehead of US imperialism,” an “oppressor of Arabic peoples’ liberation efforts” or an “artificial entity built on stolen land and with scrounged money,” showing a “parasitic character.”<sup>54</sup> Applying this explanatory (and strongly evaluative) scheme, almost all political conflicts were related to Israel (and Jews), with Jews described as the absolute evil. In the end, this led to a point where anti-Zionism became—also in West Germany—a model for interpreting the world.

The above-mentioned utterances coming from the then left milieus raise, once again, the questionability of separating anti-Zionism from antisemitism.<sup>55</sup> Antisemitism could be observed on the basis of not only the language use, but also of concrete actions by leftist protagonists: the attack on the Jewish community house in West Berlin on November 9, 1969 by the *Tupamaros of West Berlin* (which was justified with the foregoing narrative) proves how much the rejection of Israel was tainted with antisemitism.<sup>56</sup> Besides this act of terrorism, further incidents of the 1960s and 1970s included the arson attack on a nursing home in the Jewish community in Munich,<sup>57</sup> the sympathetic responses of the Red Army Faction (RAF) and other groups with regards to the assassination of Israeli athletes during the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972 by the Palestinian *Black September Organization*,<sup>58</sup> the hijacking of an *Air France* airplane by Pales-

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52 T. Haury, “Zur Logik des bundesdeutschen Antizionismus,” in *Vom Antizionismus zum Antisemitismus*, ed. L. Poliakov (Freiburg: ça ira, 1993), 141.

53 These included back then and in the following decades amongst others the daily newspaper *junge Welt*, leaflets of various Middle Eastern groups, the publications *Rote Fahne*, *Linksruck*, and *Rote Presse Korrespondenz*.

54 Haury, “Der neue Antisemitismusstreit der deutschen Linken,” 144; cf. also M.W. Kloke, “Antizionismus und Antisemitismus als Weltanschauung? Tendenzen im deutschen Linksradikalismus und -extremismus,” in *Extremismus in Deutschland: Erscheinungsformen und aktuelle Bestandsaufnahme*, ed. Bundesministerium des Innern (Berlin: BMI, 2004), 173.

55 Cf. Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 371.

56 Cf. W. Kraushaar, *Die Bombe im Jüdischen Gemeindehaus* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, Institut für Sozialforschung, 2005). For further examples cf. Kloke, *Israel und die deutsche Linke*, and Haury, “Der neue Antisemitismusstreit der deutschen Linken.”

57 Cf. W. Kraushaar, “Wann endlich beginnt bei Euch der Kampf gegen die heilige Kuh Israel?” *München 1970: Über die antisemitischen Wurzeln des deutschen Terrorismus* (Reinbek: Rowohlt Verlag, 2013).

58 Cf. S. Grigat, “Antisemitismus und Antizionismus in der Linken,” *Hagalil*, April 18, 2002, <http://www.hagalil.com/antisemitismus/europa/linker-antisemitismus.htm>.

tinian (*Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine* [PFLP]) and German (representatives of the *Revolutionary Cells*) terrorists in July 1976.<sup>59</sup>

During the Lebanon War in 1982, Israel was continuously accused of committing a genocide. Meanwhile, particularly among the German left, comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany became more and more noticeable (e.g., through allusions such as “final solution to the Palestinian question”<sup>60</sup>).

A first turning point, that is, the problematization of the antisemitic content of such statements among the Left could be witnessed in the 1980s. This “time of tensile testing and learning processes”<sup>61</sup> were even further intensified in the 1990s, specifically during the Gulf War in 1991. The prominent outlook in large parts of the Left at that time (trivializing the dictator Saddam Hussein, characterizing the US as belligerent as well as ignoring the concrete danger of war for Israel) led to the separation of the so-called *Antideutschen* (*anti-Germans*)<sup>62</sup> from the anti-imperialist core (which continued to represent the classic anti-Zionist position).<sup>63</sup> Hence, a fundamental shift in perspective happened within single groups within the left milieu in Germany, both regarding the Middle East conflict as well as antisemitism.<sup>64</sup> Since then, left-wing antisemitism was recognized

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59 After touchdown in the Ugandan city of Entebbe, the passengers were separated into Jewish and non-Jewish groups and the non-Jewish hostages were released. The only hostage that was killed tragically was a concentration camp survivor (cf. V. Weiß, “Die antizionistische Rezeption des Nahostkonflikts in der militanten Linken der BRD,” in *Antisemitismus, Antizionismus, Israelkritik*, ed. M. Zuckermann [Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005], 231; Stein, *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Israelkritik*, 52).

60 Haury, “Der neue Antisemitismusstreit der deutschen Linken,” 145; for its function and linguistic patterns, see part 4 of this article.

61 Cf. Kloke, “Antizionismus und Antisemitismus als Weltanschauung?,” 177.

62 Mouthpieces of the political camp of the *Antideutschen* amongst others were the weekly newspaper *Jungle World* (dissociated from the *junge Welt*) as well as the magazines *Bahamas* and *konkret*.

63 Cf. Haury, “Der neue Antisemitismusstreit der deutschen Linken,” 143. For a detailed analysis concerning the separation of the left spectrum in the Federal Republic of Germany, cf. also J. Gerber, *Nie wieder Deutschland? Die Linke im Zusammenbruch des “realen Sozialismus”* (Freiburg: ça ira, 2010); P. Nowak, *Kurze Geschichte der Antisemitismusdebatte in der deutschen Linken* (Münster: edition assemblage, 2013).

64 These developments of reorientation within certain left-wing groups were already anticipated through the debates about the Lebanon War in 1982 but also through the impulses originating from the “historians quarrel” and the Jenninger speech (cf. Haury, “Der neue Antisemitismusstreit der deutschen Linken,” 145). However, in the 1990s—not so far from the inception of the Gulf War—the commencing Oslo peace process must be mentioned, which, in its turn, led to a shift and easing of the dispute over Israel among the Left. Yet, this period of calm rapidly ended with the outbreak of the Second Intifada in September 2000 (cf. Kloke, “Antizionismus und Antisemitismus als Weltanschauung?,” 180).

within its own ranks and publicly discussed. The *Antideutschen* considered antisemitism in Germany to be widespread and of eliminatory character

since the “Jew” as bogeyman shows a constitutive meaning for the ideological construction of the “German people.” The extermination of the Jews by the Nazis, thus, has to be considered as the negative climax of both the civil society as well as the “German nation.”<sup>65</sup>

Auschwitz is no longer regarded as merely the crimes of National Socialism but particularly as *the* German crime. Additionally, the *Antideutschen* clearly rejected the reunification of Germany due to a threatening hegemonic positioning of the German state. Members of this group comprehend Zionism as response to the European antisemitism and defend, amongst others, the existence of Israel as a crucial shelter for all Jews.<sup>66</sup> This conflict, among the Left, was about

the relation toward Israel and the Mideast conflict, the meaning of the Shoah for the present, attitudes toward antisemitism, nationalism and the German past, the question of anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism, the relation toward war and peace and the relevance of international solidarity. It is, to sum it up, about the identity of the radical left in Germany after 1989.<sup>67</sup>

The critical reflection on left-wing antisemitism that started in the 1990s admittedly did not lead to the termination of anti-Zionist distortions of Israel. During the Second Intifada (2000) and the Lebanon War in 2006 (and 2009), antisemitic stereotypes were reproduced again through the loop of anti-Zionism. Newspapers such as *junge Welt*, *Neues Deutschland*, and *Unsere Zeit* reconfirmed a continuous virulence of anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist patterns of the (radical to the extreme) left.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Haury, “*Der neue Antisemitismusstreit der deutschen Linken*,” 152.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. M.W. Kloke, “Israel: Alptraum der deutschen Linken?” in *Exklusive Solidarität: Linker Antisemitismus in Deutschland. Vom Idealismus zur Antiglobalisierungsbewegung*, ed. M. Brosch et al. (Berlin: Metropol, 2007), 316. Imhoff could prove antisemitism among the readers of left-oriented media. Cf. M. E. Imhoff, *Antisemitismus in der Linken: Ergebnisse einer quantitativen Befragung* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2011). Giesel examined antisemitism in the course of a qualitative corpus analysis of reader comments from the newspapers *New Germany (Neues Deutschland)* and *taz*; cf. L. Giesel, “‘Kriegstreibende Zionisten’ und ‘Pro-Israel-Lobby’: Verbaler Antisemitismus in Kommentartbeiträgen des Neuen Deutschlands und der *Taz*,” in *Gebildeter Antisemitismus: Eine Herausforderung für Politik und Zivilgesellschaft*, ed. M. Schwarz-Friesel (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2015). Such analyses prove a continuous presence of left-wing antisemitism.

Looking at rather left-oriented media within the German mainstream illustrates that Israel-related antisemitism in this milieu also does not represent an individual case (and cannot at all—as often suggested—be considered a taboo). Right after its foundation in 1948, the renowned publisher of the newspaper *Die Zeit*, Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, already classified Israel as comparable with Nazi Germany.<sup>69</sup> Also Rudolf Augstein drew this analogy in his *Spiegel* articles of the 1970s and 1990s.<sup>70</sup> Jakob Augstein, stepson of the popular publisher and editor-in-chief of the left-liberal *Freitag*, in recent history continued this tradition in his *Spiegel* columns by repeatedly comparing Israel with Nazi Germany (“Gaza is a prison. A camp.”<sup>71</sup>). Furthermore, J. Augstein equated the Jewish state with the South African apartheid regime,<sup>72</sup> alleged intentional killing of Palestinian children by the Israeli army and claimed that ultra-orthodox Jews would “follow the law of revenge.”<sup>73</sup> The journalist also reproduced world conspiracy ideologies (“[...] the Netanyahu government keeps the whole world on a leash with rising war hymns,” “[...] the whole world as a hostage [...]”<sup>74</sup>; “when Jerusalem calls, Berlin obeys its will.”<sup>75</sup> The fact that a major part of German journalists defended Jakob Augstein against the allegations antisemitism of the Wiesenthal Center—despite his obviously demonizing statements—confirms the social

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69 “One can only hope what the shock regarding the death of Count Bernadotte means for the responsible men of the government of Israel, that they pause at least for a moment and recognize appalled how far they have already come on their way that has led another nation into the abyss.” M. Gräfin Dönhoff, “Völkischer Ordensstaat Israel,” *Die Zeit*, September 23, 1948, <http://www.zeit.de/1948/39/voelkischer-ordensstaat-israel>.

70 “It must not be the same people, that seek to engrain the remembrance of the platform in Auschwitz forever into the memory of us and the ones that come after us [...], to act as the ‘master race’ toward the Palestinians.” R. Augstein, “Ist Israel noch zu retten?” *Der Spiegel*, October 15, 1990, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13502118.html>.

71 J. Augstein, “Gesetz der Rache,” *Spiegel Online*, November 19, 2012, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/jakob-augstein-ueber-israels-gaza-offensive-gesetz-der-rache-a-868015.html>.

72 Cf. S. Beyer and E. Follath, “Spiegel-Streitgespräch. Was ist Antisemitismus?” *Spiegel Online*, January 14, 2013, <https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-90535659.html>.

73 Augstein, “Gesetz der Rache”; cf. also P. Kuhn, “Dämonisierung mit dem Ziel der Delegitimierung,” *Die Welt*, January 16, 2013, <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article112787522/Daemonisierung-mit-dem-Ziel-der-Delegitimierung.html>; M. Küntzel, “Die Jakob Augstein-Debatte: Eine verpasste Chance,” in *Gebildeter Antisemitismus: Eine Herausforderung für Politik und Zivilgesellschaft*, ed. M. Schwarz-Friesel (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2015), 53–74.

74 J. Augstein, “Es musste gesagt werden,” *Spiegel Online*, April 6, 2012, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/jakob-augstein-ueber-guenter-grass-israel-gedicht-a-826163.html>.

75 J. Augstein, “Die deutsche Atom-Lüge,” *Spiegel Online*, June 4, 2012, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/u-boote-fuer-israel-wie-deutschland-die-sicherheit-in-nahost-gefaehrdet-a-836816.html>.

acceptability of antisemitic slurs within the German mainstream discourse. The central argument in the debates was that Augstein would represent critical, left-wing journalism and, therefore, his articles cannot represent expressions of antisemitic thinking. This debate exemplifies “a removal of taboos, a rationalization and a legitimization of antisemitic stereotypes.”<sup>76</sup> The Augstein case demonstrates that the conditions for such statements change if they are expressed by left-liberal elites—positively connoted and chosen opinion leaders of the German political mainstream.<sup>77</sup>

The highest circulating German daily newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* also reproduced antisemitic stereotypes in the form of illustrations. Two scandals took place in 2013 and 2014: in one of them, the newspaper published a cartoon that depicts Israel as a monster, who is served by a maid representing Germany.<sup>78</sup> In the second case, they released a cartoon showing Facebook founder, Mark Zuckerberg, as an octopus with a hooked nose, incorporating the application WhatsApp.<sup>79</sup> Even if such cartoons were rejected as beyond the antisemitic paradigm, its presence nonetheless demonstrates once more that antisemitic imagery can be observed in left-liberal mainstream media as soon as journalists refer to Israel and/or Jewish persons. Because of their potential impact on opinions within wider mainstream society, the presence of such images is even more dangerous in this media spectrum than in decidedly left-wing press.<sup>80</sup>

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**76** L. Rensmann, “Antisemitismus und Israelfeindschaft,” in *Deutschland, die Juden und der Staat Israel: Eine politische Bestandsaufnahme*, ed. O. Glöckner and J. H. Schoeps (Hildesheim: Olms, 2016), 277.

**77** For a detailed analysis of the statements of J. Augstein and the thereby triggered debate, see M. Küntzel, “Die Jakob Augstein-Debatte,” and especially L. Betzler and M. Glittenberg, *Antisemitismus im deutschen Mediendiskurs: Eine Analyse des Falls Jakob Augstein* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2015).

**78** Cf. F. Augstein, “Ist ein gehörntes Monster antisemitisch?” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 2, 2013, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/bebilderung-der-seite-das-politische-buch-ist-ein-gehoerntes-gieriges-monster-antisemitisch-1.1710600>; “Antisemitismus-Vorwurf wegen Karikatur: ‘SZ’ bezeichnet Veröffentlichung als ‘Fehler,’” *Spiegel Online*, July 3, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/antisemitismus-vorwurf-sueddeutsche-nennt-veroeffentlichung-fehler-a-909299.html>.

**79** Cf. P. Gensing, “SZ macht Facebook zu Jewbook,” *Publikative.org*, 2014, accessed November 12, 2017, <https://publikative.org/2014/02/25/sz-macht-facebook-zu-jewbook/>; “Mark-Zuckerberg-Karikatur: Antisemitismus-Vorwurf gegen ‘Süddeutsche Zeitung,’” *Spiegel Online*, February 25, 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/mark-zuckerberg-wiesenthal-center-kritisiert-su-eddeutsche-fuer-antisemitische-karikatur-a-955613.html>.

**80** For a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the image of Israel within the German mainstream media, see R. Beyer, *Mit deutschem Blick: Israelkritische Berichterstattung über den Nahostkonflikt in der bundesrepublikanischen Qualitätspresse. Eine Inhaltsanalyse mit linguistischem*

On the political level, the behavior of politicians from the party DIE LINKE (The Left) have provoked various scandals in the past twenty-five years, leading to debates on antisemitism in the party.<sup>81</sup> Related incidents prove that certain parts of the party are still dominated by anti-Zionist attitudes. For instance, the politician Hermann Dierkes from the city of Duisburg repeatedly called for a boycott of Israel; the left-wing city councillor Erika Zemaitis rejected the subsidization of the reconstruction of the synagogue in Herford that was destroyed by the Nazi regime; furthermore, in 2008, eleven delegates of the party were absent during the vote concerning a proposal to fight antisemitism (shortly before the seventieth anniversary of the *Reichspogromnacht*), because they conceptually equated solidarity with Israel with a form of taboo to criticize Israeli politics.<sup>82</sup> The politicians Annette Groth, Inge Höger, and Norman Paech participated in the so-called *Gaza flotilla raid* in May 2010. The legitimization of the latter was questioned by large parts of the media. Relativization of terror and fraternization with Hamas and Hezbollah could be observed at demonstrations initiated by the party, in which left-wing and Islamist groups showed their hostility toward Israel together with extreme right-wing actors.<sup>83</sup> Former head of the DIE LINKE parliamentary group, Oskar Lafontaine (as well as Norman Paech), repeatedly expressed understanding for the Iranian nuclear program.<sup>84</sup>

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*Schwerpunkt von Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung und Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung, Die Welt und Welt am Sonntag, Nürnberger Nachrichten, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Die Zeit, Focus und Der Spiegel* (Bremen: edition lumière, 2016). For a qualitative analysis of articles and readers' comments in the left liberal newspaper *Die Zeit*, see M. J. Becker, *Analogien der "Vergangenheitsbewältigung": Antisraelische Projektionen in Lesercommentaren der Zeit und des Guardian* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2018); trans. *ibid.*, *Antisemitism in Reader Comments: Analogies for Reckoning with the Past* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

**81** For a detailed overview of antisemitism in the party DIE LINKE, which constitutes the successor party of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* [SED]), cf. Kloke, "Antisemitismus in der Linkspartei"; S. Salzborn, "Die Linkspartei hat ein Antisemitismusproblem," *Die Welt*, June 8, 2010, <http://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article7957984/Die-Linkspartei-hat-ein-Antisemitismusproblem.html>; S. Salzborn and S. Voigt, "Antisemitismen als Koalitionspartner? Die Linkspartei zwischen antizionistischem Antisemitismus und dem Streben nach Regierungsfähigkeit," *Zeitschrift für Politik* 3, no. 58 (2011): 290–309.

**82** Cf. Kloke, "Antisemitismus in der Linkspartei," 162.

**83** Cf. Haury, "Der neue Antisemitismusstreit der deutschen Linken," 151. For statements relativizing terror of DIE LINKE politician Christine Buchholz cf. Kloke, "Antisemitismus in der Linkspartei," 160.

**84** Cf. *ibid.*, 161, including corresponding statements of the Rosa Luxemburg foundation). Obviously, one shall, at this point, not forget the commitment of politicians from the party DIE LINKE such as Petra Pau and Gregor Gysi. Kloke summarized these accomplishments (cf. *ibid.*, 169).

Yet, not only within DIE LINKE, but also among other left-wing, autonomous movements and non-governmental organizations, one can find the tendency to treat antisemitism as merely a historically relevant phenomenon and consequently—intentionally or not—justify demonization as well as the delegitimization of Israel, since criticism of the latter cannot possibly constitute antisemitism.<sup>85</sup>

During the events of the now irrelevant anti-globalization movement *attac* and the Trotskyist group *Linksruck*, Israel was repeatedly characterized as “fascist.” Here again, the “heroic fighters of the intifada”<sup>86</sup> were praised and supporters called for the boycott of Israeli goods.<sup>87</sup> Through the often-used comparison between international financial capital and national community/-ies, economic processes are simplified; furthermore, such schemes activate patterns that are mainly known from the right-wing nationalism or *voelkisch* anti-capitalism.<sup>88</sup> This way

anti-Zionist attitudes within the anti-globalization movement as well as in the peace movement provide ideological points of reference for anti-Israeli argumentation from the extreme right or Islamist side.<sup>89</sup>

In summary, it can be stated that anti-Zionism, justified by a simplified anti-imperialist worldview, has been constantly expressed in the GDR and in left-wing milieus of the FRG, in particular since 1967. Leftist groups have been characterizing Israel as the ultimate evil, as the henchman or even as the secret string-pulling puppet master of US imperialism. They reproduce antisemitic stereo-

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**85** Yet, statistical surveys such as the renowned FES-Mitte-Study from 2016 show that the presence of antisemitism in the left-wing milieu has to be classified according to the so-called political center and the right-wing spectrum: “Classic antisemitism exhibits an almost linear increase (extreme left-wing 0%, rather left-wing 1%, center 7%, rather right-wing 14%, extreme right-wing 16%). The same holds true for Israel-related antisemitism (extreme left-wing 14%, rather left-wing 16%, center 23%, rather right-wing 43%, extreme right-wing 46%)” (A. Zick, B. Küpper and D. Krause, *Gespaltene Mitte—Feindselige Zustände: Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland 2016*, ed. for the Friedrich Ebert Foundation by R. Melzer (Bonn: Dietz, 2016), 64).

**86** The fraternization with Palestinians can even go so far that some anti-imperialists see Hamas as a partner and suicide bombers as martyrs that are fighting a justified battle (see statements in *Linksruck*, quoted in Haury, “Der neue Antisemitismusstreit der deutschen Linken,” 143 and 148).

**87** *Ibid.*, 155.

**88** *Ibid.*, 156.

**89** Stein, *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Israelkritik*, 91; cf. also T.-C. Heger, “Die Linke und der Jihad: Ideologische Schnittstellen zwischen der extremen Linken und dem sunnitischen Islamismus” (MA thesis, Universität Potsdam, 2007).



types, projective-exonerative analogies, and thereby demonize and delegitimize the Jewish state. The linguistic patterns of repertoire used to devalue Israel and, consequently, Jews, will be illustrated in the following part of the article.

## 4 Patterns of Language Use and their Communicative Functions

As explained in part 3 of this article, anti-Zionism functions as a pivotal ideological justification as well as the carrier of antisemitism on the Left. This function of anti-Zionism gets commonly characterized through the metaphor of a “Trojan horse.”<sup>90</sup> Thus, antisemitism (not only) on the Left can be communicated in an “honorable”<sup>91</sup> way, that is, as a verbal offense against injustice, oppression, and exploitation.

As it was mentioned before, anti-Zionism is based on an anti-imperialist worldview that is determined by categories such as *Manichaeism*, *personification*, *conspiracy theories*, and an *extreme reference to “the people.”*<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, I have added the following categories into Haury’s synopsis: *stereotypes*,<sup>93</sup> *Nazi comparisons* as well as *further (partly historical) comparisons.*<sup>94</sup> All these categories constitute the anti-Zionist repertoire of demonization. Due to shortage of space, only a few examples of the complex patterns of language use will be taken into consideration. These, in their respective turns, constitute implicit forms of anti-Israel demonization.<sup>95</sup>

Speakers construct the Middle Eastern conflict as a conflict in which—through a recourse to an anti-imperialist scheme (representing a Manichaean

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<sup>90</sup> Kloke, “Zum Antisemitismus in der deutschen Linken.”

<sup>91</sup> Améry, “Der ehrbare Antisemitismus,” 131; cf. also M. Gallner, “Like a Cloud Contains a Storm: Jean Améry’s Critique of Anti-Zionism,” *Fathom*, Autumn 2016, <http://fathomjournal.org/like-a-cloud-contains-a-storm-jean-amerys-critique-of-anti-zionism>.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Haury, “Die ideologischen Grundlagen.”

<sup>93</sup> The allegation of a Jewish world conspiracy constitutes only one of many antisemitic stereotypes.

<sup>94</sup> The categories of Manichaeism and personification constitute parameters that can be completed with stereotypical meaning.

<sup>95</sup> For a (linguistic) approach regarding implicit forms of Israel-related antisemitism inter alia within political mainstream cf. Becker, *Antisemitism in Reader Comments*; L. Giesel, “NS-Vergleiche und NS-Metaphern im öffentlichen Kommunikationsraum sowie in E-Mails an die Israelische Botschaft und den Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland: Korpuslinguistische Perspektiven auf konzeptuelle, strukturelle und funktionale Charakteristika” (PhD diss., Technische Universität Berlin, 2017); Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*.

worldview)—Palestinians play the role of the *weak, the non-white oppressed, in need of help, who are fighting for their legitimate goals*; Israel, though, plays the role of an *oppressive, omnipotent, and illegitimate power*.<sup>96</sup>

- (1) The Palestinian resistance movement call to battle against the occupier (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, reader's comment, December 7, 2017)

At the same time, commenters regard the presence of Palestinian life in the Middle East as something *natural*, while Israeli existence, however, is regarded as something *artificial*.<sup>97</sup>

- (2) My opinion is that the Jewish claim to Palestine doesn't have a rational basis. The Arabs have lived in that region all along and so they are of course entitled to live there today. Their leaders have my full support to fight off the planned Zionist takeover! (*taz*, reader's comment, December 7, 2017)

It is striking that commenters often refer solely to the (usually demonized) *Israeli Prime Minister* or to the *Zionist state* but not to the *Israeli populace*.<sup>98</sup> The usage of the category *extreme reference to the people or humans vis-à-vis Israelis* would demand the concession that Jewish citizens also have the right to exist in the Middle East. Writers acknowledge group-related rights only in reference to the Palestinian side. The avoidance of such a reference to the Israeli populace also leads to the case where Jews are conceptually sidelined. Hence, left speak-

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. M. Schwarz-Friesel, "Explizite und implizite Formen des Verbal-Antisemitismus in aktuellen Texten der regionalen und überregionalen Presse (2002–2010) und ihr Einfluss auf den alltäglichen Sprachgebrauch," in *Judenfeindschaft und Antisemitismus in der deutschen Presse über fünf Jahrhunderte: Erscheinungsformen, Rezeption, Debatte und Gegenwehr*, ed. M. Nagel and M. Zimmermann (Bremen: Edition Lumière, 2013), 1005. The examples presented in this section originate from texts by Kloke ("Antisemitismus in der Linkspartei,") and Becker (*Antisemitism in Reader Comments*) as well as from a current corpus of web comments set up by the author of the article. The latter consists of reader's comments of left-wing oriented media that relate to the decision of US president Donald Trump on December 6, 2017 to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel (these are roughly 300 readers' comments on *Süddeutsche Zeitung* [Facebook presence of the newspaper], *taz*, and *Die Zeit*).

<sup>97</sup> This outlook corresponds to the typical right-wing construction of an autochthonous German people on the one side and the international Jewry which is incapable of nation building on the other side (cf. Haury, "Der neue Antisemitismusstreit der deutschen Linken," 150).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

ers can—through the loop of the “legitimizing excuse ‘Israel’”<sup>99</sup>—demonize the reference group (partly in striking an aggressive tone), without being potentially confronted with the reproach of reproducing misanthropic, in this particular case, antisemitic hate speech, which of course would not be compatible within a leftist self-conception.<sup>100</sup>

In parallel with this abstractly avoiding reference to Israeli citizens in the anti-Zionist discourse, speakers personify the concept of “the enemy, Israel.” As indicated above, the personification of Israel often introduces the reproduction of antisemitic stereotypes. According to this observation, the commenter in the next example, a journalist of the *junge Welt*, reproduces the stereotype of vengefulness as a characteristic of the personified Israel:

- (3) With old Testament right, Israel cracks down on the Palestinian rebellion in the occupied territories. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. And that is clearly an understatement. An eye for hundred eyes, and a tooth for hundred teeth, that’s the invoice.<sup>101</sup>

Next to the stereotype of vengefulness, writers in the left milieu frequently refer to greed for money. They can utter such an allegation explicitly, when they speak of “greedy Jews”; or implicitly coded, when they speak of “the finance capital” or “the Wall Street.”<sup>102</sup> In the present-day discourse, this stereotype in its actualized form gets transferred onto Israel—a country that allegedly is greedy for land:

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**99** Y. Pallade, “Aktueller Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,” in *Neues vom Antisemitismus: Zustände in Deutschland*, ed. H. Helas, D. Rubisch and R. Zilkenat (Dietz: Berlin, 2008), 105.

**100** Cf. Stein, *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Israelkritik*, 31.

As soon as speakers reproach the Israeli ability to put up with a fight, they direct that reproach not only toward Israelis, but also toward Jews in the commentator’s own country (and worldwide). Through the oscillating usage of the lexemes *Zionists*, *Israelis*, and *Jews* (which are understood as synonyms), they (unsubstantially) equate these groups. The first ones are often explicitly named, the latter one, however, only implied. In the frame of such a perspective, German Jews get forced in a position of justification pressure as soon as the Middle Eastern conflict escalates again.

**101** Pirker 2000 in *junge Welt*, quoted in Kloke, “Antisemitismus in der Linkspartei,” 159.

**102** Stein, *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Israelkritik*, 90. In the context of the *Occupy Wall Street* movement related reminiscences are articulated as well. Here, references to *Rothschild* (as a symbol of Jewish influence) are rarely made, instead such an explicit reference were replaced by naming *Goldman Sachs* and a sinister *East Coast lobby* operating behind the scenes (for an analysis of such paraphrases cf. Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 10). Hence, an imaginary is chosen that is accessible to an antisemitic interpretation of the world. While criticizing banks and economic sectors, speakers also use locust metaphors (which represents a pattern with a long history) and activate a scenario of menace, in which “lo-

- (4) Historically, Jerusalem belongs to the Palestinians. In 1947, there was a clear arrangement of who gets what. But for Israel that wasn't enough. It wants more and more. (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, reader's comment, December 6, 2017)

In the context of this stereotype, writers often express world conspiracy theories. In the twentieth century, related theories entered the left discourse through the allegations such as “Zionist multimillionaires who [...] repeatedly meet at private conferences in order to support Israel's aggression.”<sup>103</sup> Today, such constructions also appear in moderate left-liberal media (cf. e.g., Jakob Augstein's columns presented in part 3 of this article). In the following extract, a reader of *Süddeutsche Zeitung* accuses Israel (again personified) of destabilizing the region of the Mideast and of being responsible for the refugee crisis (and therefore for the current destabilization of the European Union and Germany):

- (5) Israel displaces people, those flee by the millions to other countries. Consequently, these countries got destabilized and through Zionist/imperialist cover-ups pushed into a civil war—even more people have to flee, this time towards Europe, and lo and behold, the number of Muslims in Europe raises disproportionately. Basically, only a Zionist conspiracy in order to weaken Europe, especially the evil Germany. (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, reader's comment, December 6, 2017)

Furthermore, writers in the present-day discourse on the Mideast conflict reproduce stereotypes of deceit and hypocrisy and—in conjunction with these—the instrumentalization of antisemitism:

- (6) Israel claims, Hamas would have “killed” an Israeli soldier and start to shoot at Palestinian territory. (*Die Zeit*, reader's comment, August 3, 2014)
- (7) While other countries deal with their (admittedly often bigger) conflicts by force, Israel categorically whines, screams, and wails, emphasizing that they'd have the right, because of antisemitism (*Die Zeit*, reader's comment, August 4, 2014)
- (8) Israel's behavior [is] comparable with the one of a beaten child [...]. The Jews have suffered for centuries, and now they themselves spread misery in their self-created ghetto. (*Die Zeit*, reader's comment, November 29, 2012)

The latter comment shows the paternalistic allegation that Israel would behave like a child and therefore is—in the political arena—backward. Additionally, the commenter strikingly uses the lexeme “ghetto.” This is an allusion to the Nazi

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custs” pounce on defenseless consumers, destroy economic states, and in fact, going as far plunging the whole states into chaos.

<sup>103</sup> T. Haury, “Von der linken Kritik des Zionismus zum antisemitischen Antizionismus von links,” in *Antisemitismus: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. S. Salzborn (Giessen: NBKK, 2004), 150.

crimes and therefore an implicit comparison between Israel and Nazi Germany.<sup>104</sup> As I have already pointed out in part 3 of this article, ever since the German left (i.e., in both German states, GDR and FRG) has express(ed) Nazi comparisons on a regular basis. Such comparisons can be realized explicitly by word play like *Nazisrael* or *Zionazis*.<sup>105</sup> In the previous section, I also demonstrated indirect forms of exonerative antisemitism, not least with the aid of articles written by well-established journalists such as Gräfin Dönhoff and Rudolf and Jakob Augstein.

Instead of listing examples of my linguistic data, in which writers utter Nazi comparisons, I would rather refer to the three communicative functions<sup>106</sup> that accompany Nazi comparisons, which constitute the essence of exonerative antisemitism: Through the use of Nazi comparisons, Israel gets *demonized* (in the course of a so-called perpetrator-victim-reversal); beyond that, Nazi crimes are deprived of their singular status and consequently *relativized*. If the writer is a member of the German in-group (i.e., that of the former perpetrators), the relativization of Nazi crimes is accompanied by an unburdening of guilt from the writer's own national community. Hence, Israel serves as a projection surface for characteristics that are opposed to a positive collective self-image (the Holocaust is, for many Germans, the largest impediment to this sort of affinity with national identity). The unburdening of guilt allows a discursive overcoming of the historically bad conscience that prevents individuals from having a sincere identification with their national identity.<sup>107</sup> Within the course of Nazi comparisons (as a form of Israel-related demonization) the above-mentioned category of an *extreme reference to the people* gets activated. This is similar to the Manichean scheme referred to at the beginning of this section, where interpreting the world images of what is good and what is bad, gets reinforced. Yet, in this case the pos-

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**104** Cf. Becker, *Antisemitism in Reader Comments*; Giesel, *NS-Vergleiche und NS-Metaphern*. It is an implicit Nazi comparison, because the commenter activates the Nazi scenario only through using the lexeme "ghetto." An explicit Nazi comparison would mean: Israel is/acts like Nazi Germany (*X is like Y*).

**105** Cf. Kloke, *Israel und die deutsche Linke*, 171; Rensmann, *Demokratie und Judenbild*, 315.

**106** When I use the term (*communicative*) *function(s)*, I refer to deductions that can be inferred out of the given information regarding the proportion of the two correlated issues. Readers can, but they don't have to be able to infer these potential deductions. This means that the actual understanding of the analogies can diverge subjectively. Questions, such as whether the writer utters a comparison intentionally, or if readers can entirely understand the comparison, do not, however, affect the functions of analogies in that context. For a detailed analysis of functions, inter alia, of Nazi comparisons cf. Becker, *Antisemitism in Reader Comments*.

**107** Cf. Rensmann, *Demokratie und Judenbild*, 73; Globisch, *Radikaler Antisemitismus*, 43.

itive image does not affect other (per se positively evaluated) peoples but specifically the *own people of the Germans*.

The reconstruction of a need for unburdening of guilt of the German ingroup that accompanies Nazi comparisons is rather striking in the context of leftist groups. After all, the left internationalism takes nationhood as an anachronistic identity promoting concept. As a result, leftist groups think of themselves as being free of national sentiment and, thus, of needs for exoneration and national self-identification.<sup>108</sup> The frequent, almost obsessive presence of Nazi comparisons demonstrates, however, overlaps between different political camps in Germany in relation to their needs as soon as the Nazi past and antisemitism become the issue.

From the above-mentioned Manichean worldview predefined, the *relation to the people* also gets activated or expanded via a positive relation of leftist groups to national liberation movements (with regard to anti-Zionist utterances, positive images are projected onto Palestinians).<sup>109</sup> Leftist anti-Zionists express such a perspective whilst, at the same time, vehemently rejecting the existence of the Israeli state. This double standard finally results in a delegitimization of Israel:<sup>110</sup>

(9) [...] in the course of the years we started to resolutely [question the right to exist of the apartheid state of Israel].<sup>111</sup>

Such a double standard can, however, also occur when writers apply especially high moral standards to Israel. This is characteristic for anti-Israeli manifestations coming from the left-liberal camp: writers take the view that Israelis and/or Jews would not have learned anything from the past persecution of Jews. On the other side, there are the German (non-Jewish) writers who—not least because of their presumed historical sensitivity (that they tend to express, for example, via Nazi comparisons)—would have learned from the (Nazi) past and therefore hold an exemplary role. Accordingly, they perceive themselves as morally superior to Israelis and/or Jews. Double standards come into effect

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**108** A. Ludwig shows that the category *nation* plays a much bigger role in the thinking of the New Left than it might at first sight appear. Cf. A. Ludwig, *Neue oder Deutsche Linke? Nation und Nationalismus im Denken von Linken und Grünen* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995); cf. Haury, *Antisemitismus von links*, 154; Stein, *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Israelkritik*, 76.

**109** Cf. part 3 and Kloke, “Zum Antisemitismus in der deutschen Linken.”

**110** A delegitimization of the Israeli state obviously appears in the course of each category presented in this article that as a whole constitutes the anti-Zionist repertoire of demonization.

**111** Pirker 2013 in *junge Welt*, quoted in Kloke, “Antisemitismus in der Linkspartei,” 160.

when writers reproach Israel for defending itself against terrorism and gratuitously suggest pacifism, indulgence, and de-escalation instead.

In the example introduced above from the *junge Welt*, the reference to Israel as an “apartheid state” is of interest. This is one among those historical comparisons through which anti-Zionism is characterized in left-wing milieus. The reference to apartheid shows Israel as a state with a fully established, institutionalized segregation between Israelis and Palestinians.<sup>112</sup> The above-mentioned functions of demonization (of Israel) and relativization (of racist crimes of the South African apartheid regime) can be further witnessed here.<sup>113</sup>

The apartheid regime represents a product of European colonialism that in its late form is shaped by (justifying) racist positions. A demonization of Israel through comparisons to apartheid, colonialism, expansionism, militarism, and chauvinism represent standardized distortions of Israel and of Zionism in leftist contexts.<sup>114</sup> In the course of historical comparisons (next to the one of apartheid especially with the European colonial empires in mind), in which European crimes are projected onto Israel, writers reinforce the Manichean worldview of the anti-imperialist anti-Zionism and consequently justify their own rejection of the Israeli state.<sup>115</sup>

A central concomitant phenomenon of anti-imperialist anti-Zionism is the one of anti-Americanism. The rejection of the US, which works as the prototype of capitalism and imperialism per se, gets interlinked with anti-Zionist conceptualizations that are unambiguously pre-defined by conspiracy-theory explanations and a clear idea of good and bad.<sup>116</sup> In the present-day discourse, such a

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**112** Cf. Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 164; cf. also B. Pogrund, *Drawing Fire: Investigating the Accusations of Apartheid in Israel* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014) and B. Pogrund, “Israel has many Injustices: But it is not an Apartheid State,” *Guardian*, May 22, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/may/22/israel-injustices-not-apartheid-state>.

**113** Cf. Becker, *Antisemitism in Reader Comments*.

**114** Cf. *ibid.*; Kloke, “Zum Antisemitismus in der deutschen Linken.”

**115** The advantage of such demonizing (and relativizing of historical crimes) comparisons is that speakers devalue and ostracize Israel without using antisemitic stereotypes. They therefore represent a form of anti-Zionist expressions that leftist speakers can utter without being labelled as antisemitic (cf. Becker, *Antisemitism in Reader Comments*).

**116** Cf. Rensmann, *Demokratie und Judenbild*, 304. According to Markovits, fear of and criticism regarding capitalist modernity are the unifying elements that interconnect antisemitism and anti-Americanism. Since the mid-nineteenth century, American Jews and the USA have been depicted as a symbol of modernity, “motivated by money, greedy, metropolitan, universalistic, individualistic [...]” A. S. Markovits, *Amerika, dich haßt sich’s besser: Antiamerikanismus und Antisemitismus in Europa* (Hamburg: Konkret Literatur Verlag, 2004), 216; cf. also A. S. Markovits, *Uncouth Nation: Why Europe Dislikes America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

conceptualization gets conveyed in the idea of the “Wall Street as the worldwide center of power of the Jewish finance capital.”<sup>117</sup> In relation to Israel, an anti-American resentment is expressed when (as stated in part 3) writers depict the Israeli state as a “bridgehead” or “spearhead”<sup>118</sup> or as the “agency of American imperialism”<sup>119</sup> in the Middle East. Writers also allege a Jewish-Zionist control over the US (or the US president) as soon as the US government makes a decision in favor of Israeli interests:

- (10) It is Payday for Trump, he has to act and this is what he did. The Jewish-Zionist donors take their toll. And it doesn't matter to him if the region [of the Mideast] burns. (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, reader's comment, December 7, 2017)

Frequent allegations of an Israeli-US-American plot demonstrate the compatibility of antisemitism and anti-Americanism within the frame of an anti-imperialist worldview.

Patterns of language use are shaped by the motifs and ideological background of writers. They can convey their conceptualizations introduced above in an explicit manner, which is often the case, when it comes to utterances of the radical left. Hence, writers use superlative (“the worst dictatorship in the world,” “one of the most violent and militarized societies in the world”)<sup>120</sup> and request the destruction of Israel.

Moderate representatives of a left-minded thinking, however, can convey Israel-related demonization implicitly (inter alia via rhetorical questions, advices, admonitions) and/or embedded into socially acceptable patterns of argumentation.<sup>121</sup> Hence, instead of radical claims to destroy Israel, writers propose a secularization of Israel and/or the birth of a multi-ethnic state. Yet, with the aid of knowledge regarding the high degree of destructive antisemitism within certain contemporary Muslim communities (not only) in the Middle East, readers can discern that both speech acts—aggressive request as well as *constructive* advice—would lead to the same consequences for Jewish life in the Middle East. The advantage of the second variant, of course, is that due to its subtle nature, it is accessible in debates of the political mainstream. The examples shown in parts 3 and 4 of this article, however, prove that (not least because of the anonymity guaranteed by the internet) an implicit and/or elaborate nature even in

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117 Rensmann, *Demokratie und Judenbild*, 309.

118 Haury, “Der neue Antisemitismusstreit der deutschen Linken,” 147.

119 Haury, *Antisemitismus von links*, 442.

120 Quoted in Haury, “Der neue Antisemitismusstreit der deutschen Linken,” 147.

121 Cf. Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 276.



left-liberal milieus, and therefore in the mainstream, are no longer unconditional requirements for the expression of antisemitic attitudes—such processes might redeem explicit verbal antisemitism from its presence as a phenomenon of marginal groups.

## 5 Conclusion and Outlook

In both East and West Germany anti-Zionism—justified by an anti-imperialist worldview—was established at an early stage, especially after 1967. This ideology represents a simplistic interpretation of the world, in which Israel always plays the role of the ultimate evil; via projective-exonerating analogies, writers additionally depict the Jewish state as a return of German and/or European crimes as well as a partner of the repelled US-imperialism. In the course of this role assignment, which is embedded in an unequivocal black-and-white scenario, writers can (among other forms of demonization) transfer antisemitic stereotypes onto Israel.

The patterns described lead us to numerous contradictions and moral convictions within a leftist world view, which representatives of the related milieus otherwise obviously avoid or do not anticipate. These include: (1) degradation and ostracism of a certain group that are (2) accompanied by the reproduction of antisemitic stereotypes; (3) the relativization of crimes in the German and European past through Nazi and other historical comparisons; (4) as a consequence of such a relativization (in case of Nazi comparisons), an unburdening of the German national in-group and thus a strengthening of national self-images of Germans; (5) no matter if the comparisons are related to the German, the Palestinian or other peoples (that are depicted as oppressed)—comparisons of that kind presume an almost uncritical-affirmative relation to the concept of *the people*.

On the surface and in spite of such contradictions, one can speak of an attractiveness of anti-Zionism that arises out of its “rhetorical flexibility.”<sup>122</sup> First, writers can renounce familiar patterns of explicit hostility toward Jews. They can claim that their “criticism” only applies to the Jewish state and that is based on humanistic principles<sup>123</sup> and therefore cannot have any antisemitic basis. Furthermore, their criticism is tabooed out of a misunderstood historical responsi-

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122 Kloke, “Kein Frieden mit Israel,” 160.

123 Cf. Améry, “Der ehrbare Antisemitismus,” 131.

bility. Following this line of reasoning, it is not antisemitism, but the reproach of antisemitism against the leftist writers that becomes the scandal.

By means of the anti-Zionist camouflage, antisemitic tropes can infiltrate the mainstream of the German society. Even if explicit anti-Zionist utterances, as they come from the radical left do get problematized, patterns of language use among left-liberal milieus can lead to the point, where antisemitic stereotypes (and other forms of demonization) can reach the status of what is permissible to say. That makes them significantly more dangerous than explicit, traditional forms of verbal Jew-hatred, which only have a limited appeal within mainstream society. Despite linguistic differences, the conceptual basis—the rejection of everything that is Jewish—remains and can become acceptable to the majority. In this respect, the analysis of socially acceptable forms of antisemitic hate speech must be brought to the fore of present-day antisemitism research.

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Linda Giesel

# Comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany in Contemporary German Discourse

## Abstract

Nazi comparisons are communicative strategies to express defamation against individuals or groups of people and to generate outrage in the space of public communication. Producers direct analogies toward the historical awareness of the recipients and furthermore anticipate their emotional reactions.

Since the beginning of the 1980s, we can determine that rhetorical dereferencing on the National Socialist (hereafter NS) past is made in connection with altercations concerning Israeli politics. In comparisons between National Socialists and Israelis, a correlation is established that defames the State of Israel as a continuity of the NS dictatorship. Apart from the relativization of National Socialism, the portrayal of the victims of the past as perpetrators of the present is furthermore a relativization of guilt. This form of imagination and interpretation discloses the desire for the relief from and resistance to culpability. It also services refusal of remembrance concerning the NS past, which is a functional element of antisemitism in the German post-Holocaust society.

In a linguistic corpus study that includes more than ten thousand emails, which were addressed to the Embassy of Israel in Berlin and the Central Council of Jews in Germany between 2002 and 2014, I analyzed verbal antisemitic Nazi comparisons,<sup>1</sup> for example, “What Israel is doing with the annexation of Gaza is for me, personally, a form of a concentration camp!” (an email to the Embassy of Israel with reference to the Israel-Gaza conflict in 2014). Most of the emails with comparisons to Nazi Germany were sent during periods of military conflicts in the Middle East. However, writers constantly produce those derealizations, even during times of (military) de-escalation in the conflict.

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<sup>1</sup> This research was conducted within the project “Antisemitism in the World Wide Web” at the Technical University of Berlin (see [https://www.linguistik.tu-berlin.de/fileadmin/fg72/Antisemitism\\_2.0\\_short\\_version\\_final.pdf](https://www.linguistik.tu-berlin.de/fileadmin/fg72/Antisemitism_2.0_short_version_final.pdf)) and financially supported by the German Research Foundation (DFG). Furthermore, parts of the corpus data are based on the research project “Conceptualization and Verbalization of Contemporary Antisemitism in Germany” by Monika Schwarz-Friesel.



The systematic corpus-based study consists of quantitative evaluations as well as of qualitative analyses concerning the verbal realization of comparisons and antisemitic stereotypes. These results reveal that analogies between Israel and the German Nazi regime were realized predominantly as utterances without typical comparative connectives. These expressions address Israeli politicians in reference to different National Socialist officials, for example, *Hitler* and *Goebbels*, or the Israeli military in reference to *Wehrmacht* and SS. Those expressions focus primarily on the agents and frame them as perpetrators of the present. On the other hand, producers of Nazi comparisons also describe Palestinians as victims by referring to Gaza as the *Warsaw Ghetto* or *Auschwitz*. In my article, I present the results of this study and illustrate them by using examples of the corpus data.

## 1 Introduction: Development and Function of Nazi Comparisons

Since the post-war period, it can be determined that Nazi comparisons<sup>2</sup> were used in and beyond Germany to equate politicians, practices, institutions, and crimes with entities and circumstances of the Nazi era to defame and stigmatize political opponents. Especially during the Cold War, analogies were drawn from both the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic to accuse each other of acting like the National Socialists or using their methods.<sup>3</sup> In reference to constructing the Berlin Wall, the West German newspaper, *Rheinische Post*, described the GDR in 1961 as

(1) Ulbricht's large Concentration Camp.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> I use the term *comparison* in order to denote the common expression of *Nazi comparison*, even though they are heterogeneous comparisons. Those are basically characterized by drawing an analogy between two entities from different conceptual domains, for example, *Anne is like a nightingale*. Levinson denotes those utterances as “similes” in reference of figurative and heterogeneous comparisons. See S. C. Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 17th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 155.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. G. Stötzel, “Zur Geschichte der NS-Vergleiche von 1946 bis heute,” *Politische Semantik. Bedeutungsanalytische und sprachkritische Beiträge zur politischen Sprachverwendung*, ed. J. Klein (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1989), 266–67.

<sup>4</sup> *Rheinische Post*, 17.08.1961; as quoted in T. Eitz and G. Stötzel, *Wörterbuch der “Vergangenheitsbewältigung.” Die NS-Vergangenheit im öffentlichen Sprachgebrauch* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2007), 1:404.

Several politicians, for example, Willy Brandt, expressed similar statements concerning the lockdown of East Germany and the GDR citizens' escape attempts.<sup>5</sup> Besides foreign affairs, Nazi comparisons were used in debates on domestic affairs to discredit politicians from the opposition party or in entirely other contexts, such as abortion or animal rights.<sup>6</sup> They all have in common that they function as communicative strategies to express defamation against individuals or groups of people and to generate outrage in the space of public communication.<sup>7</sup> Those analogies are directed toward the historical awareness of the recipients and, furthermore, anticipate their emotional reactions,<sup>8</sup> because they refer to an era that represents inhumanity and terror like no other period of time.<sup>9</sup>

In the early years of using such phrases in political debates, right after World War II, there was no critical historic and linguistic reflection on them. It was not until the late 1960s that the first assessments on Nazi comparisons occurred, which marked them as “dangerous equation”<sup>10</sup> and relativizations of the National Socialist past, as well as the violation of human rights.<sup>11</sup> Despite the increased problematization of the use of those verbal strategies, there is also an increase of the usage of Nazi comparisons in international debates. Marie-Hélène Pérennec even describes this as “inflationary usage,”<sup>12</sup> which is continually repeated in inner-German and international debates, for instance, the verbal attacks of the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in the spring of 2017 toward the Ger-

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5 Cf. Stötzel, “Zur Geschichte der NS-Vergleiche von 1946 bis heute,” 267.

6 For example, the organization People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) planned a campaign against factory farming by using the slogan “The holocaust on your plate” (cf. Eitz and Stötzel, *Wörterbuch der “Vergangenheitsbewältigung,”* 1:350). On the other hand, Pro-Life activists have used the term “Babycast” in reference to abortions since 1979. For further explanations, see L. Giesel, *NS-Vergleiche und NS-Metaphern: Korpuslinguistische Perspektiven auf konzeptuelle, strukturelle und funktionale Charakteristika* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 69–71.

7 Comparisons between entities of National Socialism and other entities, for example, the comparison between party programs of the NSDAP and the NPD, do not belong to the Nazi comparisons I discuss below. These are historically critical comparisons that serve as a form of sensitizing for (extreme) right-wing tendencies in political parties and not as defamations or demonizations of people or institutions.

8 Cf. M. Schwarz-Friesel, *Sprache und Emotion*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Francke, 2013), 197.

9 Cf. M. Schwarz-Friesel and J. Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind: The Language of Jew-Hatred in Contemporary Germany* (Boston: University Press of New England, 2017), 134.

10 *Die Zeit*, 04.04.1969; as quoted in T. Eitz and G. Stötzel, *Wörterbuch der “Vergangenheitsbewältigung.” Die NS-Vergangenheit im öffentlichen Sprachgebrauch* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2009), 2:17.

11 Cf. Eitz and Stötzel, *Wörterbuch der “Vergangenheitsbewältigung,”* 2:17–18.

12 M.-H. Pérennec, “Nazi-Vergleiche im heutigen politischen Diskurs: Von den Gefahren falscher Analogien,” *LYLIA Lyon linguistique allemande* 16 (2008): 11.

man Government. He accused Germany of implementing “Nazi practices”<sup>13</sup> against Turkish politicians and their planned campaigns in German cities. Erdoğan’s statement hit the headlines for some weeks, and he primarily received rejection for his allegation. But the intended effect to cause a stir and to create outrage was successful.

Even though we can observe a large amount of Nazi comparisons in the past, they did not lose their effect over time: media attention.<sup>14</sup> Thorsten Eitz and Georg Stötzel identify this attention as the main target of the producers. Many of them apologize for their utterances afterwards referring to an accidental faux pas. The procedure (from drawing the comparison to generating public outrage up to the apology) has become a “stereotype ritual.”<sup>15</sup> Despite the assertion that one has to deal with an accidental verbal error, Monika Schwarz-Friesel emphasizes that speakers use Nazi comparisons as an intentional strategy that forces a reaction of indignation.<sup>16</sup>

This article examines a specific type of Nazi comparison—the equation between Israeli entities and entities of the German Nazi era. Those expressions have special functions and impact on the context of the German post-Holocaust society. Before I define them as expressions of verbal antisemitism (part 3) and present some results of the corpus study (part 4), I will provide a short insight in verbal realization of Nazi comparisons from a linguistic point of view (part 2). This contribution is based on my research as part of the dissertation I submitted to the Faculty I (Humanities) at the Technical University Berlin in 2018.

## 2 Verbal Realization of Nazi Comparisons

Speakers use various verbal expressions to draw analogies between entities of the National Socialism and other entities.<sup>17</sup> Besides formulating an explicit comparison and using *like* as connector, there are many ways to express equality or

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13 “Bundesregierung verbittet sich Erdoğan’s Nazi-Vergleich,” *Die Zeit*, March 6, 2017, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/2017-03/tuerkei-recep-tayyip-erdogan-nazi-vergleich-reaktionen>.

14 Cf. Eitz and Stötzel, *Wörterbuch der “Vergangenheitsbewältigung,”* 1:3.

15 *Ibid.*, 3–4.

16 Cf. Schwarz-Friesel, *Sprache und Emotion*, 198. If speakers use Nazi-specific vocabulary or phrases not knowing that they are drawing an analogy, for example, “to each their own” in different contexts, it can be assumed that this is an unintentional language use that exposes ignorance and unawareness of historical circumstances.

17 Comparisons and metaphors are based on analogies between two or more entities. For further explanation, see F. Eggs, *Die Grammatik von als und wie* (Tübingen: Narr, 2006), 66–67.

similarity between two or more entities, for example, *X reminds me of Y*.<sup>18</sup> Sometimes those analogies were drawn without using expressions that indicate the comparison; they are verbalized as nominal metaphors of the type *X is a Y*.<sup>19</sup> In Nazi comparisons or metaphors, the entities are equated in terms of one or more qualities, characteristics that they allegedly have in common. This asserted common quality is referred to as *tertium comparationis*, which does not necessarily need to be expressed explicitly.<sup>20</sup> The so-called third element of a comparison can also be inferred in the process of comprehension,<sup>21</sup> for example in:

- (2) Employees of Boehringer, who work in animal testing laboratories, are like Nazis from the history of Germany [...]<sup>22</sup>

The recipient has to activate the general knowledge about characteristics of the behavior of National Socialists and apply them to employees of the pharmaceutical company Boehringer. In this way, the recipient establishes the conceptualization<sup>23</sup> CHEMICAL LABORATORY ASSISTANTS ACTING LIKE NAZIS in the context of the utterance in 2). This creates an association between ANIMAL TESTING and NS CRIME, which suggests an equalization of the suffering of Nazi victims and the suffering of laboratory animals.

In addition to the variety of verbal indicators of comparison, there is also a diversity of entities that can be included in the comparison, such as persons, for example, *Hitler* or Nazi officials like *Goebbels*, institutions and organizations like the *SS* or the *Wehrmacht*, and crimes like the *Shoah*. Aside from explicit verbalizations, the comparisons can be expressed implicitly by the use of allusions or indirect utterances, such as:

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18 Cf. L. Ortner, "Wortbildungs- und Satzbildungsmittel zum Ausdruck von Metaphern und Vergleichen in Science-Fiction-Texten oder: Von 'wurstförmigen Raumkrümmern' und 'Wesen wie Ameisenigel,'" in *Studien zur deutschen Grammatik. Johannes Erben zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. E. Koller and H. Moser (Innsbruck: Institut für Germanistik an der Universität Innsbruck, 1985), 268.

19 Cf. H. Skirl and M. Schwarz-Friesel, *Metapher*, 2nd ed. (Heidelberg: Winter, 2013), 25–26.

20 Cf. Eggs, *Die Grammatik von als und wie*, 38–39.

21 Cf. *ibid.*

22 Quoted in TAZ, October 4, 2008, 30.

23 Conceptualizations can be described as mental images and mental representations. In cognitive linguistics, concepts are defined as mental units of organization that are *memorized* and processed with general knowledge in combination with subjective experiences (cf. M. Schwarz-Friesel, *Einführung in die kognitive Linguistik*, 3rd ed. [Tübingen: Francke, 2008], 108–9). Following the standards of cognitive science, I use small capital letters to refer to conceptualizations.

- (3) Unfortunately the methods used are very similar to the bad times in our history (IBD\_31.05.2010\_Sch\_019)<sup>24</sup>

For understanding of 3) it is necessary to infer the meaning of *methods which were used in the bad times in our history*. The comparison indicator *similar* establishes the analogy while the underspecified component *bad times in our history* implies the reference to Nazi Germany.

Although such expressions appear as comparisons on the linguistic surface with a characteristic structure, for example, comparison components and connectives, they basically fulfill different (cognitive and communicative) functions in contrast to “ordinary” comparisons, such as identifying differences and similarities of entities and thereby contribute to a gain of knowledge.<sup>25</sup> Pérennec determines that Nazi comparisons serve as a discursive practice that violates all conversational maxims<sup>26</sup> and deliberately abuses the cognitive role of comparison.<sup>27</sup> The functions that they fulfill in general is described in part 1. There is one specific type of Nazi comparison that is an expression of contemporary antisemitism and additionally fulfills certain functions. This form will be discussed below.

### 3 Comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany as an Expression of Antisemitism

Since the beginning of the 1980s, an increase of rhetorical dereferencing on the NS past in connection with altercations concerning Israeli politics can be determined. During this period, comparisons came especially from West German left-

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**24** This quote originates from an email to the Embassy of Israel in Berlin and belongs to the corpus data of the research project “Conceptualization and Verbalization of Contemporary Antisemitism in Germany” by Monika Schwarz-Friesel (for detailed information on this project and the specific corpus material, see Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*). Based on that material, I analyzed emails with Nazi comparisons as part of my dissertation (see Giesel, *NS-Vergleiche und NS-Metaphern*).

**25** The cognitive and communicative functions of comparisons are described in Eggs, *Die Grammatik von als und wie*, 38, and in F. Eggs, “Vergleichen und Vergleiche—Implikationen der Sprachwissenschaft für die Sprachdidaktik,” in *Gesteuerter und ungesteuerter Grammatikerwerb*, ed. T. Becker and C. Peschel (Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren, 2006), 45–48.

**26** The conversational maxims are compiled in H. P. Grice, “Logic and Conversation,” in *Syntax and Semantics*, ed. P. Cole and J. L. Morgan (Cambridge: Academic Press, 1975), 3:47–48.

**27** Cf. Pérennec, “Nazi-Vergleiche im heutigen politischen Diskurs,” 1.

wingers in connection with the claiming of the Golan Heights in 1981 and with the Lebanon War in 1982.<sup>28</sup> Rooted in the perception of anti-imperialistic anti-Zionism, which equates Zionism with Nazism,<sup>29</sup> persons and groups from the left-wing spectrum were already drawing comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany years before—in particular since the Six-Day War in 1967.<sup>30</sup> Since then, Israel was seen as a *vicious oppressor country* and *imperial outpost of the United States* in contrast to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which staged itself as part of a global social revolutionary liberation movement. It was supported by the anti-imperialistic internationally oriented left, which identified itself with the repressed Palestinians and positioned itself against the US and Israel.<sup>31</sup>

In 1969, immediately after an antisemitic attack of the Berlin Jewish Community Center at the remembrance event of the Pogrom Night from 1938, a claim of responsibility appeared, which was composed by the German Marxist organization “Schwarze Ratten/Tupamaros West-Berlin.”<sup>32</sup> This attack had a special relevance in the context of antisemitic assaults because on the one hand, the assassins targeted German Jews and blamed them for military actions in the Middle East, while on the other hand, this crime was committed on a date that has such a painful historical implication like November 9; thereby it was directly connected to the victims of the Pogrom and their descendants. The authors who claimed responsibility provided reasons for the anti-Jewish terrorist attack and accused Israel of committing fascistic atrocities that would be equal to the “Kristallnacht von 1938”:

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28 Cf. Eitz and Stötzel, *Wörterbuch der “Vergangenheitsbewältigung,”* 2:24.

29 An insight to anti-Zionism in connection with antisemitic concepts, also regarding the historical foundations, are given in L. Poliakov, *Vom Antizionismus zum Antisemitismus*, 2nd ed. (Freiburg: ça ira, 2006) and T. Haury, *Antisemitismus von links: Kommunistische Ideologie, Nationalismus und Antizionismus in der frühen DDR* (Köln: Hamburger Edition, 2002).

30 Cf. T. Stein, *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Israelkritik. Antizionismus in der deutschen Linken* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011), 45–47.

31 Cf. M.W. Kloke, *Israel und die deutsche Linke. Zur Geschichte eines schwierigen Verhältnisses*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt/Main: Haag und Herchen, 1994), 288.

32 During the commemoration, an explosion was supposed to injure and kill many people, especially Jews. However, because of an inoperable detonator, the prepared bomb did not explode. For details see, W. Kraushaar, *Die Bombe im Jüdischen Gemeindehaus* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, Institut für Sozialforschung, 2005).

- (4) [...] Every ceremony in West Berlin and in Germany suppresses that Zionists repeat the Kristallnacht from 1938 every day in the occupied territories, in refugee camps and in Israeli prisons. The Jews expelled from fascism have themselves become fascists [...].<sup>33</sup>

In 4) the analogy is expressed through the iterative utterance *repeating the Kristallnacht from 1938* as well as through the accusation of *becoming themselves fascists*. Thereby, the producers first refer to *Zionists* as NAZI PERPETRATORS and in the second sentence explicitly to *Jews*. Concealing the antisemitic intention with anti-Zionist expressions is a typical manifestation of anti-imperialistic antisemitism, which is revealed immediately in the text and certainly in the context of the crime.

In comparisons between National Socialists and Israelis, a correlation is established that stigmatizes the State of Israel as a continuation of the NS-dictatorship (*becoming fascists*). Apart from the extremely negative evaluation and defamation of *Zionists* and *Jews*, a relativization of National Socialism is expressed. It furthermore results in a portrayal of the Jewish victims of the past as perpetrators of the present. This reversal of perpetrators and victims serves the purpose of exoneration, which is one of the main functional elements of post-Holocaust antisemitism.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, it is accompanied by a relativization of Germany's culpability in conjunction with the projection of guilt onto Israel and/or Jews.<sup>35</sup> This form of hatred against Jews is often described as "antisemitism because of Auschwitz and not in spite of it."<sup>36</sup> Concerning these dimensions of antisemitism, Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz ascertain:

In fact, however, both dimensions are important if one wants to understand postwar antisemitism. Despite the Auschwitz experience, many Germans did not fundamentally alter their attitude toward Jews (and accordingly the traditional clichés remained in use in everyday discourse), and because of Auschwitz additional stereotypes developed based on denial of responsibility and repression of shame.<sup>37</sup>

33 Agit 883, 13.11.1969, 1. Jg., Nr. 40, 9, "Schalom + Napalm"; quoted in Kraushaar, *Die Bombe im Jüdischen Gemeindehaus*, 47.

34 Cf. W. Bergmann, "'Störenfriede der Erinnerung': Zum Schuldabwehr-Antisemitismus in Deutschland," in *Literarischer Antisemitismus nach Auschwitz*, ed. K.-M. Bogdal, K. Holz, and M. N. Lorenz (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2007), 28–29, and A. Heyder, J. Iser, P. Schmidt, "Israelkritik oder Antisemitismus? Meinungsbildung zwischen Öffentlichkeit, Medien und Tabus," in *Deutsche Zustände*, ed. W. Heitmeyer (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 3:149–50.

35 Cf. Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 58.

36 Cf. D. Diner, "Negative Symbiose: Deutsche und Juden nach Auschwitz," in *Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte? Zu Historisierung und Historikerstreit*, ed. W. Benz and D. Diner (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1987), 186.

37 Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 58.

Comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany disclose the desire for the relief from and resistance to culpability in the German post-Holocaust society.<sup>38</sup> They are to be considered as antisemitic utterances even if there is no explicit reference to Jews. Sometimes these comparisons are hidden as “criticism of Israel.” However, this serves as a camouflage for covering underlying (antisemitic) thought patterns. In Israel-related antisemitism, the reference to the State of Israel (and not to Jews) functions as a projection surface of antisemitic conceptualizations.<sup>39</sup>

With respect to Nazi comparisons that do not refer to Israeli or Jewish entities (see parts 1 and 2), the utterances in this study are characterized by further features. Regarding the potency of Nazi comparisons concerning Israel, we can determine that in addition to their already persuasive potential, due to the impact on the historical consciousness (especially in a German context),<sup>40</sup> they also manifest major elements of contemporary antisemitism:<sup>41</sup> Comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany serve to ward off guilt, they relativize NS crimes, and they function as “verbal antisemitisms”<sup>42</sup> that demonize the State of Israel.

## 4 Corpus Study: Nazi Comparisons in Emails to the Embassy of Israel in Berlin and the Central Council of Jews in Germany

To obtain a linguistically representative and systematic investigation of comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany, I carried out a corpus study that included emails that were addressed to the Embassy of Israel in Berlin and the Central

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**38** Cf. Bergmann, “Störenfriede der Erinnerung,” 28–29, and L. Rensmann, *Demokratie und Judenbild. Antisemitismus in der politischen Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004), 314.

**39** Cf. W. Frindte and D. Wammetsberger, “Antisemitismus, Israelkritik, Nationalismus—Empirische Befunde,” *Berliner Debatte Initial* 19, 1/2 (2008): 40; Stein, *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Israelkritik*, 34–36; Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 153. They also outline the difference between legitimate criticism and anti-Israeli antisemitism as a verbal expression of violence (see 145–57).

**40** Cf. Schwarz-Friesel, *Sprache und Emotion*, 197–99.

**41** Cf. inter alia the “Working Definition of Antisemitism” constituted by the IHRA, May 2016, [https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/press\\_release\\_document\\_antisemitism.pdf](https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/press_release_document_antisemitism.pdf), accessed February 1, 2021. Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 23.

**42** *Ibid.*



Council of Jews in Germany between 2002 and 2014. I would like to thank Prof. Monika Schwarz-Friesel and Prof. Evyatar Friesel who kindly provided the data material for this study. During the investigation period, 10,235 emails in total had been received by both institutions.<sup>43</sup>

The corpus study allows a combination of a qualitative cognition-based linguistic textual analysis and a quantitative statistical analysis. The investigation of self-motivated written texts offers some advantages compared to other studies about antisemitic attitudes, for example, getting insights in individual conceptualizations and emotional patterns of the authors of the texts, without influencing them by the design and the conditions of the study concerning the formulation of the questions.<sup>44</sup>

In order to analyze any verbal manifestation of such analogies in the form of explicit and implicit comparisons, metaphors, and allusions, I selected each email that included at least one of those analogies and examined it according to certain linguistic criteria, such as the structure and components of the comparison or the metaphor (entities and *tertia comparationis*), lexical indicators, and connectives.<sup>45</sup> In connection with the pattern of the Nazi comparison, I also annotated antisemitic stereotypes and descriptive or expressive lexemes of emotion mentioned in the email text.<sup>46</sup> To analyze the empirical material, I

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**43** The precise period of emails to the Central Council includes March 31, 2002 to December 31, 2008 and to the Israeli Embassy includes October 17, 2003 to December 31, 2014. During this time 8,708 emails arrived at the Israeli Embassy, and 1,527 arrived at the Central Council.

**44** See in detail Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 327–30. For further information about research methods in the field of corpus linguistics, see N. Bubenhofer, *Sprachegebrauchsmuster: Korpuslinguistik als Methode der Diskurs- und Kulturanalyse* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 111–29, and C. Scherer, *Korpuslinguistik*, 2nd ed. (Heidelberg: Winter, 2014), 3–10.

**45** These linguistic categories are based on, inter alia, Ortner, “Wortbildungs- und Satzbildungsmittel zum Ausdruck von Metaphern und Vergleichen”; Eggs, *Die Grammatik von als und wie* and Eggs, “Vergleichen und Vergleiche,” as well as on M. Thurmair, *Vergleiche und Vergleichen. Eine Studie zu Form und Funktion der Vergleichsstrukturen im Deutschen* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2001); M. Thurmair, “Vergleiche(n) im Text. Von der Wissensvermittlung zur Manipulation,” *LYLIA Lyon linguistique allemande* 15 (2008): 1–18, and on F. Dornseiff, *Der deutsche Wortschatz nach Sachgruppen. Mit einer lexikographisch-historischen Einführung und einer ausführlichen Bibliographie zur Lexikographie und Onomasiologie*, 8th ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004).

**46** These categories are based on, inter alia, Schwarz-Friesel, *Sprache und Emotion*; Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*; G. B. Ginzel, ed., *Antisemitismus: Erscheinungsformen der Judenfeindschaft gestern und heute* (Bielefeld: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1991); J. H. Schoeps and J. Schlör, eds., *Antisemitismus: Vorurteile und Mythen* (München: Piper, 1995), particularly N. Hertzitz, “Die Sprache der Judenfeindschaft,” 19–40, and on Bergmann, “‘Störenfriede der Erinnerung.’”

used a combination of inductive and deductive approaches, where the categories of the deductive analysis are based on linguistic and interdisciplinary antisemitism research. This framework was successively extended with inductive categories during the process of text coding,<sup>47</sup> which was technically realized by using the qualitative analysis tool MAXQDA.<sup>48</sup>

Due to this approach, it is possible to gain results about the frequency of emails with Nazi comparisons corresponding with the addressed institutions, while regarding the time period on the one hand and gaining a qualitative view into the thought patterns, underlying the comparisons on the other hand. In connection with the qualitative analysis, linguistic conclusions about drawing analogies and different forms of verbal realization also could be achieved. In the following sections, I present selected results of my examination and illustrate them by using examples of the corpus data.<sup>49</sup>

## 4.1 Quantitative Results

The evaluation of all 10,235 emails sent to the Embassy of Israel in Berlin and the Central Council of Jews revealed 945 (9.2%) texts that include comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany in any form of verbal realization (see part 4.2). A total of 8.8% of those texts were addressed to the Embassy and 11.5% of them were addressed to the Central Council. A correlation between the institution and the frequency of emails with those analogies can be determined, but this correlation is very weak.<sup>50</sup> The fact that Israel-related Nazi comparisons were sent to the Central Council, an institution that represents the Jewish community in Germany, illustrates that German Jews were held accountable for circumstances in the Middle East or for Israeli practices. In the mind of the writers

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. F. Breuer, *Reflexive Grounded Theory: Eine Einführung für die Forschungspraxis*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010).

<sup>48</sup> This is a software for qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods data analysis, cf. U. Kuckartz, *Einführung in die computergestützte Analyse qualitativer Daten*, 3rd ed. (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010), 12–20.

<sup>49</sup> The corpus design and the research methods as well as the results of the study are described in detail in Giesel, *NS-Vergleiche und NS-Metaphern*, 160–301.

<sup>50</sup> The chi-square test reveals a correlation between the frequency of emails with Nazi comparisons and the institution (Embassy vs. Central Council as the independent variable),  $\chi^2 = 11.26$ . The Cramér's V, which is based on  $\chi^2$ , shows only a weak effect,  $V = 0.033$ . Cf. C. Duller, *Einführung in die Statistik mit EXCEL und SPSS. Ein anwendungsorientiertes Lehr- und Arbeitsbuch*, 2nd ed. (Heidelberg: Physica-Verlag, 2007), 128–29.

of these emails, the central council of Jews in Germany functions as a representative of the Israeli state as the following examples show:

- (5) You behave worse than the NAZIs [...] you build walls, kill children and enslave and spoil the rest of humanity (ZDJ\_27.07.2006\_Zaj\_001)
- (6) Your settlement policy in the Middle East is nothing other than what Adolf Hitler unfortunately did from 1933 to 1945. (ZDJ\_29.07.2006\_Boe\_001)

The Council is directly addressed (*you*) and connected with Israel's policy toward the Palestinians. Besides the stereotypes of CHILD MURDERER, OPPRESSIVE AND ILLEGITIMATE STATE, and THE EVIL IN THE WORLD, Nazi comparisons in this context reveal a conceptual pattern which is associated with the antisemitic stereotype of JEWS ARE ISRAELIS AND DO NOT BELONG TO THE GERMAN SOCIETY. This is the current variant of the traditional Judeophobic stereotype of JEWS AS THE OTHER AND FOREIGNERS:

This fundamental categorization, which originated in antiquity, provides the foundation for all further stereotypes. Without this differentiation or discrimination, the negative attributions derived from it would not exist in such massive proportions. Only comprehensive exclusion of a certain social group makes it possible to focus on features deemed to set it apart. One generally ascribes positive characteristics to one's own group in order to reinforce one's identity and self-concept.<sup>51</sup>

The analysis of the time period, in which these emails were received, reveals that between 2006 and 2014 most of the texts with comparisons to Nazi Germany were sent during periods of military confrontations in the Middle East.<sup>52</sup> The years in which a military conflict between Israel and the Palestinian territories or Lebanon took place, like the war against the Hezbollah (2006), the military operations Cast Lead (2009),<sup>53</sup> Pillar of Defense (2012), and Protective Edge (2014), show 22.4% more emails than years without major military operations (2007, 2008, 2010, 2011 and 2013).<sup>54</sup> In contrast, the amount of emails with Nazi comparisons displays only a very small difference: 9.9% of the emails dur-

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<sup>51</sup> Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 75.

<sup>52</sup> Because of the total quantity and the balance of the data material during the whole evaluation period, only the frequencies of the emails to the Israeli Embassy were included in the calculation.

<sup>53</sup> Operation Cast Lead started already on December 27, 2008. However, the emails that refer to it were only received from the beginning of 2009.

<sup>54</sup> The absolute frequencies are 5,318 emails during the years with military conflicts and 3,370 emails during the years without military escalation periods.

ing periods of conflict include Nazi comparisons, and 7.2% of emails during military de-escalation times contain such utterances.<sup>55</sup>

This result demonstrates that Nazi comparisons concerning Israel were produced consistently, no matter if there was a military conflict or not. This finding indicates the stability of those derealizations<sup>56</sup> and their associated antisemitic conceptualizations, which were activated with, as well as without, the reference to specific military confrontations. The example in 7) is taken from a text that was sent to the Embassy during the Operation Pillar of Defense, and 8) is an email with reference to specific Israeli politicians but without any information about a specific discourse:

- (7) The Israeli state is a killer state. What is the difference between this state and the German terror system from 33–45? You do not need to be surprised that Jews are hated. (IBD\_17.11.2012\_ano\_002)
- (8) HEIL HEIL NETANJAHU! HEIL LIEBERMAN. JEW NAZIS!!!!!!!!!!!!!! (IBD\_29.04.2011\_Did\_001)

Both analogies serve the functions of Nazi comparisons even though they are constructed completely different, and they contain different entities. The next paragraph outlines several aspects of the verbal realizations of such expressions.

## 4.2 Dominant Manifestations of Verbal Realization

The qualitative analysis shows that analogies between Israeli entities and Nazi entities are predominantly realized as comparisons. From 1,021 analogies,<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> In some cases other discourse events may have occurred that also took place within these periods of time. In order to get comparable intervals and to detect an overall tendency of the distributions of emails including Nazi comparisons, this possible interference factor was accepted.

<sup>56</sup> Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz define derealizations as “linguistic utterances [which; L. G.] do not portray reality as it is (and can be intersubjectively experienced), but rather constitute, on the basis of their semantic contents, the language generators’ own subjective realities. In this case, the representational function of language, which depends largely on the criterion of truth (and the possibility of testing a thing’s truth value), is instrumentalized by the language generators to verbalize aspects of the world as they view them,” Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 158.

<sup>57</sup> For the reason that some emails include more than one analogy, 1,021 of those expressions were determined in 945 emails to the Israeli Embassy and the Central Council of Jews in Germany.

77.8% are expressed in a comparison and 22.2% in a metaphorical structure. In addition to typical comparative connectives, for example, *like* in 9), the analyzed Nazi comparisons are mainly verbalized by different terms that indicate the comparison between two or more entities, in 10)–15).<sup>58</sup>

- (9) Your home country is a torturer *like* the Nazis!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!  
(ZDJ\_17.01.2008\_ano\_001)

In utterances without explicit connectors, producers often express Nazi comparisons by negating a difference between Israel and Nazi Germany or by accusing Israel of not being any better than the National Socialists.

- (10) what you are doing is *not different* from what the Nazis did !!!  
(IBD\_00.00.2014\_Süs\_001)
- (11) Especially you Jews who had many victims in World War II, must be ashamed of such deeds. You are *not better than* Adolf Hitler and his followers (IBD\_31.05.2010\_Bra\_002)

In allegations like 11), the imagination emerges that Jews should have learned from the NS-history and therefore should act in an outstanding moral way. Furthermore, this conceptualization is one of the dominant (post-Holocaust) stereotypes that are connected to Nazi comparisons. In addition to the negation of a difference between Israel and Nazi regime, many comparisons are verbalized by comparative lexemes like *similar*, *comparable*, *parallel* or *the same*.

- (12) I have to say that Israel acts totally inhumanly. Why are they doing *similar* things that happened during the Holocaust to other peoples now? (ZDJ\_27.07.2006\_Hun\_001)

Besides the comparative lexeme in 12), we can also determine the adverb *now* which serves as a temporal deictic expression. Lexemes and phrases like *back in time*, *then*, *former*, or *in the past* in opposition to *now*, *today*, or *currently* can also function as comparison indicators:

- (13) What *former* used to be the Warsaw Ghetto is the Gaza Strip *today*. The Nazis were against the Jews and the Israelis (Jews) *today* are against the Palestinians.  
(IBD\_09.01.2011\_Fri\_001)

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<sup>58</sup> The following list of verbal realizations is based on dominant forms I carried out in the course of the corpus study. Due to the scope and the focus of this article, I will present selected verbal manifestations.

Another expression for Nazi comparisons is the focus particle *also*, which emphasizes the *tertium comparationis* as the focused element of the comparison.<sup>59</sup> The focus particle establishes an analogy relation between the entities by indicating an allegedly common feature, like being people of perpetrators:

- (14) The Holocaust was cruel and bad, but always presenting oneself as a victim is very blatant. You are *also* a perpetrator. (IBD\_10.09.2012\_Fri\_001)

In 14) it is not only the focus particle that serves as indicator of the (implicit) Nazi comparison. The reversal of victims and perpetrators is also expressed. Even though all antisemitic Nazi comparisons imply a reversal of perpetrators and victims, there are some manifestations that explicitly frame the victims of the past, their descendants, and/or Israelis (as citizens of a state of the Shoah survivors) as perpetrators of the present. In the following excerpt of an email, addressing the military operation Cast Lead, the reference to *guilt* and *shame* fits into the conceptual representation of the perpetrator-victim reversal:

- (15) The state of Israel, which is a cruel one, must now be ashamed because it is guilty. *Victims become perpetrators*. (IBD\_22.01.2009\_Gar\_001)

The projection of guilt onto Israel and/or Jews is accompanied by a relativization of Germany's culpability. As explained in part 3, expressions like that constitute a current manifestation of post-Holocaust antisemitism.

A different way to draw analogies between Israel and Nazi Germany is to use typical Nazi vocabulary, for example, *Heil* in greetings to the ambassador or the prime minister of Israel:

- (16) The Jews call Heil Hadas Handelsman (IBD\_01.07.2013\_ano\_001)  
 (17) I have heard that the Israelis greet each other with *Heil* Netanjahu (IBD\_20.10.2012\_ano\_001)

When a specific lexeme or a citation is used to refer to a situation other than the original one, it is a form of allusion from a semantic-functional point of view.<sup>60</sup> Writers also use popular phrases, for instance, known from the Sportpalast

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<sup>59</sup> Concerning the German *auch*, see G. Helbig, *Lexikon deutscher Partikeln*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Verlag Enzyklopädie, 1990), 91–92.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. P. Lennon, "Die Rolle von Anspielungen in britischen Zeitungstexten," *Zeitschrift für Angewandte Linguistik* 34 (2001): 14.

speech of Joseph Goebbels (1943) in reference to military conflicts in the Middle East:

(18) Does Israel want the *total war*? (IBD\_27.11.2012\_Amm\_001)

Israel is being accused of intending to start an ethnic (*total*) war or to plan a genocide of the Arab population, which is labeled as the *final solution/Endlösung*. The following example is also verbalized as a rhetorical question and refers to the Lebanon war in 2006:

(19) Is the disproportionate use of tanks, air force and bombs already the *final solution*? (IBD\_28.06.2006\_Jae\_001)

As indirect speech acts, rhetorical questions do not intend answers; they primarily function as assertives that express an assertion and an evaluation in an implicit way.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, to use specific expressions of the Nazi vocabulary has a special function: because of their historical relevance and the associated memories, the emotional dimension of these expressions is very important.<sup>62</sup> The utterances in 18) and 19) express an equation between the concepts Israeli Military Operation and World War II or the Shoah. For the reason of this direct equation of the entities, the analogies show intersections with nominal metaphors like the examples below. Here Gaza is conceptualized as a concentration camp, Benjamin Netanyahu as Adolf Hitler and Israel's policy as Holocaust to the Palestinians.

(20) The idea to bombard *the Gaza concentration camp* with phosphorus bombs may have been taken directly from Nazi textbooks (IBD\_00.06.2010\_Not\_001)

(21) *Netanyahu the HITLER* of the Jewish land. Lieberman the henchman (IBD\_00.05.2010\_ano\_044)

(22) Stop the *holocaust* of Palestinian people!!! STOP THIS genocide!!! (ZDJ\_15.01.2009\_Kay\_001)

Using words like *Holocaust* or *concentration camp* in different contexts causes a referential shift of their original meanings.<sup>63</sup> Concerning the term *Holocaust*,

<sup>61</sup> Cf. J. Meibauer, *Pragmatik: Eine Einführung*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 2008), 109.

<sup>62</sup> The emotional potential of antisemitic texts is described in Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 208–34.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 138.

Soric determines a successive abstraction of the word meaning that leads to a detachment of the reference to the mass murder of the European Jews.<sup>64</sup> Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz criticize this as a (ahistorical) decontextualization, which functions in a way that those words

no longer allude to the unique historical events and stages of the Nazi genocide but are employed as defamatory tools directed against Jews or Israelis. Thus the communicative strategy of perpetrator–victim reversal is mirrored on the verbal microstructural level with a derealizing effect.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to the question of realizing the analogy, the components of the comparison were also analyzed as part of the study. The results reveal that comparisons and metaphors with components referring to Israeli entities prevail (72.7%) over components referring explicitly to Jewish entities (20.8%). Concerning the basis of the comparison, which contains the concept related to National Socialism, two groups of entities can be identified. On the one hand, these comparisons refer to agents such as *Adolf Hitler*, *Nazis* in general and individual Nazi officials, like *Goebbels*, *Himmler*, and *Eichmann*, or specific NS institutions and organizations, such as *NSDAP*, *Wehrmacht*, and the *SS*. Those expressions focus primarily on the actors and frame them as perpetrators of the present.<sup>66</sup>

- (23) I can no longer identify any significant difference between the *Israeli army* and the German *Wehrmacht* in the attack on Poland in 1939  
(ZDJ\_31.07.2006\_Sch\_001)

On the other hand, producers of Nazi comparisons refer to Gaza as the *Warsaw Ghetto* or *Auschwitz* and declare the Israeli Palestine policy as *Holocaust* or *final solution*.<sup>67</sup> These utterances either focus on Palestinians explicitly or imply the conceptualization of them as victims of the Israeli state which applies Nazi methods.

- (24) Gaza, the largest *concentration camp* worldwide  
(IBD\_00.06.2010\_Wik\_001)

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64 Cf. A. Soric, “‘Bomben-Holocaust’: Eine sprachkritische Analyse eines kontroversen Ausdrucks mit rechtsextremistischem Hintergrund,” *Aptum: Zeitschrift für Sprachkritik und Sprachkultur* 2 (2005): 178–87.

65 Cf. Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 138.

66 See also examples 5)–11) and 21).

67 See also examples 12), 13), 19), 20), and 22).



Another way to draw analogies between Israel and Nazi Germany is, as shown in part 2, to express it implicitly by the use of utterances like *the past*, *the terrible history*, or:

- (25) Evil thoughts would compare this situation with *70 years ago* ...  
(IBD\_03.12.2012\_Bus\_001)

Recipients infer the meaning of such phrases by activating their background knowledge within the communicational contexts. The analogy is established by the lexeme *compare* and the underspecified component *70 years ago* implies the reference to Nazi Germany. Due to the fact that Nazi comparisons are controversial and often rejected in the space of public communication, we can assume that the writer attempts to indicate a distance from the expression by referring to *evil thoughts* and by using the subjunctive *would compare*.

## 5 Conclusion

Comparisons, which are ordinarily cognitive instruments of achieving knowledge by contrasting or identifying similarities of characteristics of entities, change their function when they are realized as Nazi comparisons. This article revealed those expressions as verbal strategies of defamation, demonization, and relativization of National Socialism as well as phenomena of contemporary antisemitism when it comes to the equation of Israel and Nazi Germany. The reversal of perpetrators and victims (and their descendants), and the projection of guilt onto Israel, which underlies such utterances, serves the purpose of exoneration, one of the main functional elements of post-Holocaust antisemitism.

The corpus study indicated that emails including Nazi comparisons were sent to the Embassy of Israel as well as to the Central Council of Jews in Germany in a similar frequency, whereas the relative amount of Nazi comparisons addressed to the Central Council is slightly higher (11.5% vs. 9.2%). The results reveal that producers, who send these texts referring to Israel to the Central Council, which acts as representation of German Jews, conceptualize **JEW AS ISRAELIS AND NOT BELONGING TO THE GERMAN SOCIETY**. This represents the current variant of the traditional Judeophobic stereotype of **JEW AS GROUP OF THE OTHER AND AS FOREIGNERS**.

Emails including those analogies were sent during periods of military conflicts as well as during times of no military altercations. This leads to the conclusion that Nazi comparisons were produced constantly and regardless of whether there was a military conflict occurring in the Middle East. The periods of military

confrontation can, for example, act as a form of valves for antisemitic expressions, but they are no trigger for antisemitism. Among other verbal manifestations, this illustrates the stable “mental system of belief and [...] interpretation of the world”<sup>68</sup> as a typical constant of antisemitism.

The analysis of linguistic forms of the analogies between Israel and the German-Nazi regime reveals a variety of verbalizations.<sup>69</sup> They are realized predominantly as utterances without typical comparative connectives, also as metaphors, as allusions through specific NS vocabulary or through implicit phrases. Producers of Nazi comparisons mainly focus on agents like Israelis and/or Jews, Israeli institutions and politicians or Jewish organizations and equate them with National Socialist entities. Furthermore, they refer to Gaza as *Warsaw Ghetto* or *concentration camp* and the Palestine policy as *Holocaust*. By the use of those verbalizations, writers explicitly or implicitly characterize Palestinians as Current Victims of the Israeli Nazi Regime. In addition to the antisemitic impact, these demonizations express a banalization of the genocide of the European Jews and the Nazi era in general; they mock the victims of the National Socialists as well as their descendants. The exposure of a language usage that trivializes Nazi crimes is of course of utmost relevance—not only from a linguistic perspective but also from a historical and socio-political point of view. Concerning an uncritical handling of those verbal attacks, Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz warn:

When drastic expressions [...] and comparisons to the Nazis are used repeatedly for so-called criticism of Israel without being challenged, after a while their inappropriateness goes unnoticed and habituation sets in.<sup>70</sup>

Research studies identified the high frequency of the usage of Nazi comparisons in multiple contexts within the public and in the private space of communication.<sup>71</sup> Regarding specific comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany, the tendency of habituation is also determined in this corpus analysis. Detecting such language usage and its implications should have the aim of raising aware-

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**68** Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 18.

**69** A detailed classification of the verbal realization is given in Giesel, *NS-Vergleiche und NS-Metaphern*, 196–245.

**70** Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 13.

**71** Cf. Among others Stötzel, “Zur Geschichte der NS-Vergleiche von 1946 bis heute,” 261–76; Eitz and Stötzel, *Wörterbuch der “Vergangenheitsbewältigung,”* vol. 1 and vol. 2; Pérennec, “Nazi-Vergleiche im heutigen politischen Diskurs,” 1–12; Soric, “Bomben-Holocaust,” 178–89. Schwarz-Friesel, *Sprache und Emotion*, 197–200; Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind*, 344–45.

ness of the dangers that are involved in it, especially considering the current political tendencies and the increase of Israel-related antisemitism.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> For more details, see the development of antisemitic attitudes in A. Zick and A. Klein, *Fragile Mitte, Feindselige Zustände: Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland 2014* ed. for the Friedrich Ebert Foundation by R. Melzer (Berlin: Dietz, 2014), 68–72; A. Zick, B. Küpper, and D. Krause, *Gespaltene Mitte – Feindselige Zustände: Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland 2016*, ed. for the Friedrich Ebert Foundation by R. Melzer (Berlin: Dietz, 2016), 47–48.

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Florian Markl

## “Israel Threatens to Defend Itself”: The Depiction of Israel in the Media

In 2003, an opinion poll conducted on behalf of the EU Commission yielded one very remarkable result: 59 percent of Europeans saw Israel as the greatest threat to world peace. Not North Korea, not Iran, not Russia, but Israel. The number in Germany was even higher: Here 65 percent, almost two thirds of those questioned, singled out Israel as the greatest threat to the world.<sup>1</sup>

In 2008, 40 percent of Germans approved of the statement: “What Israel today does to the Palestinians is not substantially different from what the Nazis during the Third Reich did to the Jews.” In an opinion poll two years later, 57 percent of Germans approved of the claim “Israel is conducting a war of extermination against the Palestinians.”<sup>2</sup> And according to another opinion poll, conducted in 2016, 40 percent of Germans agreed with the statement: “Given how Israel treats the Palestinians, I can easily understand why one is against the Jews.”<sup>3</sup>

All these statements have one thing in common: They are grotesque distortions of what Israel is and what Israel does.

If we want to understand how distorted opinions like these are formed, we have to take a close look at the way the media reports on Israel and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Since most Europeans get all their information about the Jewish State from the media, the way Israel is depicted in the media’s reporting exerts a tremendous influence on Europeans’ attitude toward Israel.

The analysis of Austrian media that *Mena Watch* has conducted since 2011 clearly shows that in their coverage of Israel, journalists time and again do not adhere to basic journalistic standards. They often draw a picture of Israel that is based on imbalanced and misleading reporting; the selective omission of facts; the application of double standards when judging Israeli behavior com-

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1 Flash Eurobarometer, “Iraq and Peace in the World,” issued November 2003, [http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/flash/fl151\\_iraq\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/flash/fl151_iraq_full_report.pdf), 81.

2 Unabhängiger Expertenkreis Antisemitismus, “Bericht des unabhängigen Expertenkreises Antisemitismus. Antisemitismus in Deutschland—Erscheinungsformen, Bedingungen, Präventionsansätze,” issued November 10, 2011, <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/17/077/1707700.pdf>, 53.

3 Unabhängiger Expertenkreis Antisemitismus, “Bericht des Unabhängigen Expertenkreises Antisemitismus,” issued April 7, 2017, <https://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/18/119/1811970.pdf>, 65.

pared to that of other countries; and the presentation of their own biased attitudes toward Israel as if they were plain facts.

## Classic Traditional Antisemitism

Sometimes the reporting crosses every line and is plainly antisemitic. Take for example a caricature that was published as an illustration for a review of two books about Zionism in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in 2013. Here, Israel was portrayed as an ugly monster with horns, with the caption saying the Jewish State was a “greedy juggernaut.”<sup>4</sup> Note that the caricaturist did not have Israel in mind at all when he drew the monster—that connection was made by the editors of the newspaper.<sup>5</sup>

Another German newspaper, the *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, in yet another caricature used the antisemitic motif of the well-poisoning Jew, in this case showing Israel’s prime minister Benyamin Netanyahu poisoning a piece of bread with a deadly substance called “settlement policy” in order to feed it to a pigeon named “Peace Process.”<sup>6</sup> Of course, you will never find a similar caricature about Mahmoud Abbas’ incitement to violence and terror: Only Israelis and Israel’s political leaders are fair game.

It was also classic antisemitism when the chief foreign affairs editor of Austria’s biggest daily newspaper, the *Kronen Zeitung*, referred to Israelis living in communities beyond the so-called Green Line as “venomous snake brood” (“giftiges Natterngezücht”).<sup>7</sup> Needless to say that that the journalist who wrote the article, Kurt Seinitz, never uses similarly derogatory language when referring to other groups of people.

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<sup>4</sup> “Deutschland serviert,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 2, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> M. Wuliger, “Gefräßiges Monster Israel: Wie die Süddeutsche Zeitung antisemitischen Spin produziert,” *Jüdische Allgemeine*, July 3, 2013, <http://www.juedische-allgemeine.de/article/view/id/16410>.

<sup>6</sup> “Geh’n mer Tauben vergiften im Park...,” *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, August 5, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> K. Seinitz, “Jüdischer Extremismus ist auch nicht neu,” *Kronen Zeitung*, June 9, 2014.

## Comparison with National Socialism

According to most definitions, including the one brought forward by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in May 2016,<sup>8</sup> and since then adopted by numerous governments and other entities, it is also antisemitic to equate Israel with Nazi Germany or portray Israeli actions as similar to what the Nazis did. In a caricature published by *profil*, the Austrian equivalent to the German weekly magazine *Der Spiegel*, during the Lebanon war in 1982, we saw Heinrich Himmler and other Nazis sitting side by side with Hitler in hell, who expresses his admiration for Israel’s prime minister Menachem Begin. A more recent example comes from 2004, when the *Kleine Zeitung* published a caricature entitled “Then and Now” showing two scenes. On the left-hand side, a grim-faced soldier wearing a swastika armband and standing in front of a ruined house looks at a young boy wearing a Yellow Star. On the opposing right-hand side, we see the exactly same scene with only two minor changes: The swastika on the soldier’s armband has been replaced by a Star of David, and the boy wears a kaffiyeh, the checkered Palestinian headdress.<sup>9</sup> The message is simple and clear: The Israelis nowadays are doing exactly the same to the Palestinians that the Nazis once did to the Jews.

## De-Realization

These are clear-cut examples for the anti-Israeli variance of antisemitism. But more often the media contributes to the widespread, one-sided, false, and unfair picture of Israel in more subtle ways. A de-realizing reporting about the Jewish state and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict forms the foundation on which the demonization of Israel, its de-legitimization, and the application of double standards can flourish—the “three Ds” that the former Jewish-Russian dissident Natan Sharansky famously identified as key markers for Israel-related antisemitism.<sup>10</sup>

What is meant with the term de-realization? In the words of scholars Monika Schwarz-Friesel and Jehuda Reinharz, de-realization is

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<sup>8</sup> International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, “Working Definition of Antisemitism,” issued May 26, 2016, [https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/press\\_release\\_document\\_antisemitism.pdf](https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/press_release_document_antisemitism.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> P. Pismestrovic, “Einst und jetzt,” *Kleine Zeitung*, May 19, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> N. Sharansky, “3D Test of Anti-Semitism: Demonization, Double Standards, Delegitimization,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16 (2003): 3–4.



a phenomenon that results when a mental interpretive schema applied to a specific extra-linguistic situation, in the case of anti-Israelism to a country, results in a distorted, narrowed, or completely false perception and assessment of the situation. The criterion of falsity or distortion emerges from the incongruence between the subjective perspective of the observer and the objective or intersubjective situation.<sup>11</sup>

In this sense de-realization is a distorted view of reality. The three Ds thus

reveal themselves as a direct consequence of the derealized position, and to a great extent build on each other or mutually support each other in pseudo-rational “argumentation.”<sup>12</sup>

By constant repetition, in our case by the media’s biased, inadequate, and faulty reporting about Israel, de-realizing claims gain the appearance of objectivity. A picture of Israel is thus set that obscures substantial parts of reality, does not acknowledge them, or presents them only in a highly distorted form. The result is a picture in which the Jewish State is presented almost exclusively as the aggressor, whereas the Palestinian side of the conflict is barely ever mentioned—unless, of course, it can be portrayed as the victim of Israeli aggression.

## “Israel Threatens Hamas”: The Depiction of Israel as the Aggressor

Let’s look at some examples to illustrate how this works. The first one features the Austrian daily newspaper *Kurier*. On June 18, 2012, Palestinian terrorists coming from the Sinai Peninsula infiltrated Israel and attacked a group of construction workers, one of whom, an Israeli Arab, was killed.<sup>13</sup> In the following days, hundreds of rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip into Israel.

For almost a week, *Kurier* did not write a single word about the escalation in Israel’s south. Only when the Israeli Air Force reacted to the ongoing Palestinian attacks by bombarding Hamas facilities in the Gaza Strip did *Kurier* wake up. “Near East. New Attacks on Gaza,” was the headline of the first short report to be found in the newspaper.<sup>14</sup> The rockets raining down on Israel were still

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11 M. Schwarz-Friesel and J. Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind: The Language of Jew-Hatred in Contemporary Germany* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2017), 158.

12 *Ibid.*, 157.

13 “South border clash leaves civilian, terrorists dead,” *Ynet News*, June 18, 2012, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4243734,00.html>.

14 “Nahost. Neue Angriffe auf Gaza,” *Kurier*, June 24, 2012.

not mentioned at all. When *Kurier* finally reported on the hundreds of rocket attacks, it did so under the headline: “After the cease-fire announcement, Israel threatens Hamas.”<sup>15</sup>

By ignoring both the initial Palestinian terrorist attack as well as the subsequent barrages of rockets fired from the Gaza Strip, Israel was presented as the aggressor who threatens Palestinians with death and destruction. This kind of misrepresentation has become a regular feature especially when it comes to rocket attacks from Gaza. As long as Israel doesn’t respond, Palestinian rocket fire is of no interest whatsoever. When Israel reacts, the headlines will more often than not be something like: “Israel attacks Gaza.”

The very same mechanism was at play at the beginning of the 2014 Gaza War: Three Israelis—often referred to as “settlers,” although two of them did not live in the disputed Jewish communities in the West Bank—were kidnapped and murdered by Hamas terrorists. A huge search operation by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) was met with rockets fired from the Gaza Strip: three on June 24, four on June 25, six on June 27, six again on June 28, four on June 29, twelve on June 30, and so on and so forth.<sup>16</sup> On July 8, Israel started “Operation Protective Edge” in order to stop the incoming rocket barrage from Gaza.

For weeks, the Palestinian rocket fire was completely ignored by the Austrian media, and when Israel finally acted to suppress the rocket launches, it quickly morphed into the aggressor. The *ORF* evening news reported: “After Israeli attacks [sic!] on Hamas facilities in the Gaza Strip, Hamas today again responded with counter-attacks [sic!] on Israeli localities.”<sup>17</sup> The headline and the subsequent report, representative of numerous other during the course of the war, completely reversed the factual timeline of events. And of course, phrases were extensively used that tried to explain what was happening by alluding to ancient Jewish principles from the Old Testament and alleged Jewish character traits, which ostensibly were still motivating Israel’s behavior. “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” said one *ORF* report;<sup>18</sup> the daily newspaper *Die Presse* wrote about an “archaic cycle of revenge and vengeance” being reenacted in the

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15 “Israel droht Hamas nach Verkündigung der Waffenruhe,” *Kurier*, June 25, 2012.

16 “News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (June 25 – July 1, 2014),” The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, issued July 1, 2014, accessed November 23, 2018, <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/20663>.

17 “Raketenangriffe auf Israel,” *ZiB* 2, July 7, 2014.

18 E. Gollackner, “Eskalation der Gewalt in Nahost,” *ZiB* 24, July 9, 2014.

war;<sup>19</sup> and according to the *Kronen Zeitung*, Austria's best-selling daily newspaper, Israel's attempts to stop the rocket fire from Gaza were "revenge attacks."<sup>20</sup> The depiction of Jews as revengeful has for centuries been a frequent component of antisemitic propaganda.

On June 15, about a week into the war, Israel accepted an Egyptian cease-fire proposal and stopped its military operations. Hamas rejected the proposal and kept firing rockets at Israel. After a couple of hours, Israel resumed its fight against Hamas. If you followed the development on that day on Austrian media websites, you would have received a totally different impression of what had happened. "Israel again bombards targets in the Gaza Strip," wrote the *Kronen Zeitung*, which at least mentioned the fact that Hamas never ceased firing at all—other media simply left out this not unimportant piece of information. "Again Israeli air attack on the Gaza Strip," said the *Kurier's* website; "New Israelis Attack on Gaza Strip," headlined the *Salzburger Nachrichten*, with a smaller headline above saying: "Israel attacks again"; "The cease-fire is over," *Kleine Zeitung's* website reported about a cease-fire, that one side of the conflict never had adhered to in the first place;<sup>21</sup> and "For now no cease-fire: Israel again flies air attacks," wrote the *ORF*.<sup>22</sup> The *ORF* evening news reported about a possible escalation of the war due to Israeli threats—and did not say a single word about Hamas' refusal to stop firing rockets at Israel. The bottom line of all these misleading headlines and reports is this: Even when Israel temporarily suspended its military operations, it was still the Jewish State which was depicted as being the attacker and aggressor.

## When Pictures Omit One Part of the Story

The ways in which Palestinian violence was blurred out can be shown by looking at the photos that the *Kurier* chose to publish during the Gaza War. Between July 9 and September 3, the daily newspaper published a total of 134 articles about the war which included 54 photographs. Almost completely missing in these pic-

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19 T. Vieregge, "Der Friede liegt fern, die Visionäre haben ausgeträumt," *Die Presse*, July 10, 2014, <https://www.diepresse.com/3835589/der-friede-liegt-fern-die-visionare-haben-ausgetraumt>.

20 "Racheangriffe auf Gaza," *Kronen Zeitung*, June 30, 2014.

21 F. Markl, "Der ewige Aggressor Israel," *Mena Watch*, July 15, 2014, <https://www.mena-watch.com/der-ewige-aggressor-israel/>.

22 F. Markl, "Der ewige Aggressor Israel—Fortsetzung," *Mena Watch*, July 15, 2014, <https://www.mena-watch.com/der-ewige-aggressor-israel-fortsetzung/>.

tures of more than seven weeks—of at times intense fighting—were Palestinian attacks on Israel or Palestinian fighters. Only one photo showed two masked men on a motorcycle who were described as Hamas fighters, but they were not shown as doing actual violence.<sup>23</sup> And while more than 4,000 rockets were launched from Gaza during the course of the war, there was not a single picture showing a Palestinian rocket attack. Only one very small picture showed a cloud of smoke in the sky: That was all that remained of a Palestinian rocket after it was intercepted and destroyed by the Israeli Iron Dome defense system.<sup>24</sup> Not showing a single Palestinian rocket attack, to be sure, also meant that *Kurier* did not show the location from where all these rockets were fired: often times from densely populated residential areas in the Gaza Strip. Hamas basically took the civilian population hostage and used it as a kind of human shield in its war against Israel. Indiscriminately firing rockets at Israeli villages and cities was a war crime, according to the international law; doing so from civilian residential areas was a war crime as well. Although photos showing such Palestinian attacks were available, *Kurier* decided to completely omit them in its coverage of the war, thus literally showing only one side of the conflict.

There were, to be sure, photos of Palestinians—but mostly of Palestinian civilians, often children or injured people, many times contrasted with pictures showing Israel’s mighty military power. On July 19, *Kurier* published a collage of five photos. One big picture, providing the background for the other ones, showed a huge cloud of dust rising, apparently the result of an Israeli missile hitting a target somewhere in the Gaza Strip. In the four corners of this photo there were four smaller ones. The picture in the upper left corner showed two small Palestinian children, their faces dirty and one of them apparently injured. In the upper right corner, two Palestinian males carried away a third, an obviously injured one. On the bottom left side, the viewer caught a glimpse of a Palestinian street through a hole in a wall, presumably damage caused by an Israeli attack. And the photo on the bottom right-hand side showed a tank with an Israeli flag, swirling up dust as it rapidly moved forward in the direction of the photographer. All in all, four of the five pictures showed results of Israeli military action or injured Palestinians, most notably the close-up of a very small boy, while the Israeli side was only represented by an impersonal, dangerous-looking

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<sup>23</sup> N. Jessen, “Geldflüsse der Hamas drohen zu versiegen,” *Kurier*, July 29, 2014, <https://kurier.at/politik/ausland/israel-geldfluesse-der-hamas-drohen-zu-versiegen/77.237.516>.

<sup>24</sup> N. Jessen, “Ein Krieg mit geänderten Allianzen,” *Kurier*, August 9, 2014, <https://kurier.at/politik/ausland/israel-gaza-nahost-krieg-mit-geaenderten-allianzen/79.270.569>.

and relatively high-tech military weapon system.<sup>25</sup> A very similar kind of contrasting juxtaposition was published by the *Kronen Zeitung*: Two Palestinian doctors handling an injured Palestinian toddler on one side of the picture, and again an Israeli tank swirling up dust as it speeds toward the camera.<sup>26</sup> Palestinians were presented as victims with human faces, just like during an earlier round of fighting between Israel and Hamas, when a close-up photo showed a veiled and crying Palestinian woman (headline of the article: “Suffering and Dying in Gaza”<sup>27</sup>), thus evoking compassion with Palestinians. On the other hand, rarely were photographs to be seen of Israeli victims and the hundreds of thousands of Israelis who had to run for cover in bomb shelters within seconds of the alarm bells sounding.

An analysis of the headlines used in the coverage of the Gaza War 2014 shows results similar to the analysis of the pictures: Israel was presented as an aggressive power, Palestinians were barely mentioned and were not presented as active players but only as reacting to Israeli attacks. The analysis undertaken by *Mena Watch* was confirmed by Anatol Stefanowitsch, a linguist from Berlin, who came to the conclusion that the headlines in German media showed a “systematic asymmetry in their depiction of the players,” with Israel disproportionately often being depicted as a war-mongering protagonist.<sup>28</sup>

Even in the rare cases of reporting about Palestinian violence, the danger emanating from Palestinian attacks was regularly downplayed. The thousands of rockets fired at Israel were often called “home made” in order to deny their deadly potential, and the terrorists were being belittled. For example, in a commentary published during the short Gaza War in 2012 the editor of an Austrian newspaper wrote about the “snotty-brat terrorists from Hamas” who “provoke” Israel, and said: “These Mini-Bin-Ladens shoot scrappy rockets at Tel Aviv and other localities.”<sup>29</sup>

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25 “Gaza. Die Offensive rollt,” *Kurier*, July 19, 2014, <https://kurier.at/politik/ausland/nahost-konflikt-gaza-die-offensive-rollt/75.571.134>.

26 “Israel zerstört in Gaza Tunnelsysteme,” *Kronen Zeitung*, July 19, 2014.

27 M. Giorgio, “Leiden und Sterben in Gaza,” *Kleine Zeitung*, November 17, 2012.

28 Quoted in G. M. Hafner and E. Schapira, *Israel ist an allem schuld: Warum der Judenstaat so gehasst wird* (Köln: Eichborn, 2015), 108.

29 W. Fellner, “Israel muss den Palästinenser-Staat zulassen,” *Österreich*, November 21, 2012.

## De-realization at its Best

A prime example for the de-realizing reporting about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was an article published in *Die Presse* which claimed to discuss the reasons for the breakdown of the so-called Oslo peace process. Therein, a Palestinian propagandist was quoted at length, and Israel was blamed for the absence of peace. What was completely missing was the mention of Palestinian terror—it was as if all the suicide bombings and the terror war that was launched by Yasser Arafat in 2000 and that cost the lives of more than 1,000 Israelis had never happened.<sup>30</sup>

The de-realizing view on the conflict, in which Palestinian incitement and violence is being ignored while Israel is being portrayed as a ruthless aggressor, can lead to pieces of reporting and commentary that are just absurd. During the Gaza War in 2014, the daily newspaper *Die Presse* published an op-ed by the well-known public intellectual Ian Buruma, in which the author claimed that Israel had reduced half of the Gaza Strip into rubble, and went on asking what reasons, “apart from pure bloodlust” or “a lust for violence and a thirst for revenge” there might be for “Israel’s bombs raining down on civilians.” While Israel’s military in fact undertook numerous measures in order to avoid civilian casualties in the Gaza Strip, for Buruma Israel’s actions stood in line with the German bombardment of Coventry in World War II and the American nuclear attack on Hiroshima.<sup>31</sup>

Sometimes the coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is so distorted, that it gets barely anything right at all. The most infamous example was a photo published by *The New York Times* on September 29, 2000. The caption read: “An Israeli policeman and a Palestinian on the Temple Mount.”<sup>32</sup> A closer look at the photo led to initial doubts: In the background, one could clearly see a gas station. Even someone who doesn’t know much about Jerusalem might know that there certainly is no gas station on the Temple Mount. Wherever the photo was shot, it could not have been taken where the caption claimed it was.

But that was not the only problem. As it turned out, the injured man was not a Palestinian, but Tuvia Grossman, a twenty-year-old Jew from Chicago. He had

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30 S. Knaul, “Der gescheiterte Friede von Oslo,” *Die Presse*, September 13, 2013, <https://www.diepresse.com/1452118/nahost-der-gescheiterte-friede-von-oslo>.

31 I. Buruma, “Warum der Bombenregen auf Zivilisten?” *Die Presse*, August 8, 2014, <https://www.diepresse.com/3851563/warum-der-bombenregen-auf-zivilisten>.

32 “An Israeli policeman and a Palestinian on the Temple Mount,” *New York Times*, September 29, 2000.

been on his way to the Wailing Wall, when his taxi had been attacked by an Arab mob. He had been dragged out of the car, brutally beaten and attacked with clubs; stones were smashed on his head. He somehow managed to get up and flee to a close-by gas station—the one that can be seen in the background of the photo. A group of police officers stationed there were able to disperse the violent Arab mob, thus in all likelihood saving Grossman’s live.<sup>33</sup> Instead of showing Israeli aggression against a Palestinian, what the photo really showed was the Jewish victim of a brutal attack committed by Arabs. That is de-realizing reporting almost at its best.

Only almost, because sometimes the reporting gets even worse and simply loses any contact with reality whatsoever. As for example in the case of an article published on the website of the German weekly magazine *Focus* that had the headline: “Syria doesn’t react to Israel’s poison gas attack.”<sup>34</sup> Of course, there never was an Israeli poison gas attack on Syria; the headline was pure fiction.

It is important to notice that all these are not simple mistakes or examples of sloppy journalism. If that were the case, then these mistakes would have to occur referring to all sides of the conflict. But in all the years of our media analysis at *Mena Watch*, we have not found a single case in which the distortions related to Palestinians. The “mistakes” all fed only one narrative: here the Israeli aggressors, there the Palestinian or Arab victims.

When a waiter makes a lot of mistakes calculating the customers’ bills because he is just bad at calculating, the mistakes have to go either way; if they only occur to the detriment of the customers, this suggests something beyond mere and innocuous mistakes. The same is true when dealing with “mistakes” in the media’s coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

## Conclusion

As mentioned before, the de-realizing media coverage of Israel is the foundation for the demonization and de-legitimization of Israel. Why? Because it presents reality in such a biased and highly distorted form, that Israeli actions cannot

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<sup>33</sup> S. Simmons, *David & Goliath: The Explosive Inside Story of Media Bias in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (New York/Jerusalem: Emesphere Productions, 2012), 11–14.

<sup>34</sup> “Syrien reagiert nicht auf Israels Giftgasangriff,” *Focus Online*, May 5, 2013. The headline was changed after a protest storm broke out on the internet. A screenshot can be seen at U. W. Sahn, “Journalismus vom Feinsten,” *Israelnetz*, July 5, 2013, <https://www.israelnetz.com/index.php?id=45270>.

anymore be explained by rational reasons or motivations—and other, irrational motives for Israel’s behavior have to be found.

When the firing of thousands of rockets from Gaza is simply ignored, whatever measures of self-defense Israel takes must appear as illegitimate and ruthless aggression. When Palestinian terror attacks are ignored, the purely defensive security fence alongside the so-called Green Line separating the Westbank from Israel morphs into an “apartheid wall,” allegedly erected to racially oppress the Palestinians. Since every threat to Israel’s security is either ignored or not taken seriously, there must be something in the Israeli or Jewish “nature” that makes Israelis and Jews so aggressive, violent, and a danger for the whole world.

Sometimes the distorted reporting about Israel becomes unintendedly funny, as for example with the headline I chose as the title for my contribution: The line, “Israel threatens to defend itself” or “Israel threatens with self-defense” needs no further comment.<sup>35</sup>

But the de-realizing thinking I described results in articles and magazine covers that are not funny at all. Like the cover page the German weekly magazine *stern* published in 2006: A collage of photos shows an Israeli flag, the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount, a black-and-white capture of uniformed female Israeli pioneers, and an artillery firing a shot, all overlapped by a picture of a soldier wearing a prayer shawl performing a prayer. The headline reads: “Israel. What makes the country so aggressive.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> “Israel droht mit Selbstverteidigung,” *Focus online*, January 22, 2006, [https://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/atomstreit\\_aid\\_103917.html](https://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/atomstreit_aid_103917.html).

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