

A BIBLICAL VIEW ON
Antisemitism



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Antisemitism



“Gas the Jews” – chanted on the steps of the Sydney Opera House (October 2023)

“The Holocaust isn’t about race” – Whoopi Goldberg (February 2022).

“Gunman is found guilty in the deadliest attack on Jewish people

in US history – AP (June 2023)

Google fired a prominent executive in 2021 after he posted a 10,000-word manifesto admitting to past antisemitic behavior.

“Antisemitism rose in the US in 2022 and shows little sign of abating worldwide” – AP (April 2023)

These are some of the headlines reminding us that antisemitism is on the rise. Over four years ago, I wrote a booklet on antisemitism. I feel that it is important to update the information I provided then because current events show that we have a greater problem today. That was illustrated by the several rallies in support of Hamas after its attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. How could people in this country and other countries

celebrate the slaughter of senior citizens, beheading of infants, and the rape of women?

Government and Jewish organization statistics provide documented evidence of many more violent acts directed at Jewish people and synagogues. Especially troubling have been comments made by members of Congress (e.g., Representatives Rashida Talib and Ilhan Omar).

While it may be tempting to say that these are merely words, Jewish people understand the power of words and how they can lead to actions against them. Columnist Cal Thomas quotes Sarah Stern (Endowment for Middle East Truth) who had this observation: “We Jews have learned from our long and painful his-

tory that words matter. Violence against Jews does not erupt in a vacuum; and the increasing ease with which antisemitic comments are uttered within certain segments of our society is deeply painful and disturbing.”

What is Antisemitism?

Antisemitism has been defined as hostility toward or prejudice against Jews as a religious or racial group. A German journalist Wilhelm Marr first coined the term in the 19th century. But hatred and prejudice against Jews has existed for millennia.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance uses a definition that includes eleven key areas. This would include “calling for, aiding, or justifying the

killing or harming of Jews in the name of radical ideology.” It also includes “making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews.” And it includes those who deny the fact and scope of the genocide of the Jewish people during World War II.

That doesn't mean that it is antisemitic to criticize the actions of the Israeli government. Israeli citizens do that from time to time. But comparing Israeli policy to the Nazis or holding all Jews collectively responsible for actions by the Israeli government is of concern.

While it is grammatically correct to spell antisemitism with or without a hyphen, a group of scholars expressed their desire to have the

term written without a hyphen. They believe that the hyphenated form legitimizes the term “Semitism” which is a pseudo-scientific racial classification that has been associated with Nazi ideology.

The Growing Problem of Anti-semitism

Nearly every survey taken in the last few years points to a growing problem with antisemitism. FBI reports show an increase in antisemitic assaults, accounting for more than half of all reports. Antisemitic incidents on college campuses jumped significantly a few years ago. And while we are looking at this growing problem, it is worth mentioning that Jews only make up about 1.8 percent of the US population.

Surveys in Europe show an even

greater problem. Attacks on Jews and Jewish schools and synagogues have been in the news for years. A survey of almost 6,000 Jewish people across eight nations of the European Union were asked if they considered emigrating from their home country because they didn't feel safe. Nearly half of those in France (46%) and Hungary (48%) said they considered emigrating because of their antisemitic experiences.

Antisemitism is not merely a modern problem. In the book of Esther (3:6), we read the story of how Haman "sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus." Other pagan groups and false religions persecuted the Jews because of their belief in

monotheism and their allegiance to God.

After the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the exile of Jews in AD 70, some Christians interpreted the event as a punishment for Jews for the death of Jesus. Sadly, this idea provided a foundation and justification for a Christian form of antisemitism. All sorts of myths have been spread about Jews and their practices.

One of the myths is often referred to as “blood libel.” According to this false allegation, Jews murder Christian children to use their blood in the baking of unleavened bread during Passover. Proponents even taught that Jews drink blood mixed with the wine during the Passover Seder celebrations.

Even in America, anti-Jewish ideas were accepted. In the 1930s, 30 million Americans would tune into Charles Coughlin each week to hear the priest rail against “modern Shylocks who have grown fat and wealthy” because of “the ancient crime of usury.” Henry Ford received a personal shout-out in *Mein Kampf* and was awarded in 1938 the Grand Cross of the Supreme Order of the German Eagle. Adolf Hitler owned a portrait of Ford and was inspired by his Jew hatred.

Antisemitism has always been prevalent, but there is a philosophical reason why it seems to be increasing among young people. A Harvard/Harris survey conducted in the wake of the October 7 Hamas attack on Is-

rael shows a split demographic. Older Americans believe the US is justified in branding Hamas as a “terrorist group” and believes the attack was “genocidal.” Younger Americans (18-24) disagreed with their elders.

The explanation for the difference in attitudes can be found on university campuses. Students are likely to be exposed to an intersectional framework. Intersectionality is a concept that discourages looking at unique individuals but instead focuses on groups as stereotypical images with certain traits. Modern Jews enjoy financial stability and even political power. Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Palestinian Authority are seen as weak. According to this mindset, the powerful should

be condemned while the weak should be supported.

As one commentator put it, “once you subscribe to this philosophy, you just internalized the plain-old antisemitism. Through this framework, people are reduced to statistics.” They view the world in a way similar to Marxists. In other words, they view the world through the prism of class and other distinctions and thereby justify all sorts of evil and violence.

How Should We Respond?

Most Christians accept the biblical principle that the Jews are God’s chosen people. Deuteronomy 14:2 says, “For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out

of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”

This may also explain why anti-semitism exists. God chose the Jews, and thus Satan opposes what God has chosen. If you think about it, antisemitism is irrational. Jews make up a very small percentage of the world's population. It isn't very rational to think that such a small number of people control the world's politics and economics. And hatred of Israel by Arab nations isn't very rational. Israel is about the size of New Jersey and is surrounded by Arab countries with more than 500 times the land area. Yet, Israel is the epicenter of so much of the conflict in the Middle East.

Even if someone doesn't believe the Jews are a chosen people,

they should still treat the Jews with the same dignity as any other religious or ethnic group. All of us are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and worthy of respect and dignity. Antisemitism is contrary to any human rights standard that exists even in the secular world.

We should also realize that once one ethnic or religious group is singled out for persecution, it may only be a matter of time before other groups will be marked for similar acts of disrespect, intolerance, and persecution.

We should also insist through our foreign policy that other countries treat Jewish people with respect. Unfortunately, in most Muslim countries antisemitism is practiced without any sanc-

tions from the US government. In these countries, persecution of Jews (and Christians) is not only allowed but is often encouraged.

In America, we should also ask our elected officials to take a stronger stand against antisemitism. Bari Weiss writes about antisemitism on the right and antisemitism on the left. She acknowledges that conservatives are much better at speaking out against antisemitism on the right than Democrats who have a significant antisemitic problem and anti-Israel stances. This was not always the case for the party.

President Harry Truman was threatened by some of his cabinet to not recognize the new state of Israel, but he called their bluff. He recognized Israel within 11 min-

utes of David Ben-Gurion's declaration of Israel's independence on May 14, 1948. Presidential candidate Robert Kennedy was so supportive of Israel that Palestinian extremist Sirhan Sirhan assassinated him. And we should not forget the courageous stands by Senator Joe Lieberman, who was also the first Orthodox Jew put on a presidential ticket.

It is time for members of Congress and for all of us to speak out against antisemitism here in America and across the globe. The Jewish people deserve our respect and our protection.

Additional Resources

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Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *Why the Jews?: The Reason for Antisemitism*, Touchstone, 2003.

Noah Rothman, “Why Do So Many Young People Support Hamas?” *National Review*, October 23, 2023.

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