

an·ti·Sem·i·tism

[/an(t)ē'semə'tizəm/] *noun*

Hostility to or prejudice against Jewish people.



MUST-WATCH:

Rabbi Sacks addresses antisemitism



Antisemitism and anti-Zionism



The mutation of antisemitism



The BDS campaign



RABBI SACKS SPEAKS



"The hate that begins with Jews never ends with Jews... It wasn't Jews alone who suffered under Hitler. It wasn't Jews alone who suffered under Stalin. It isn't Jews alone who suffer under ISIS or Al Qaeda or Islamic Jihad. We make a great mistake if we think antisemitism is a threat only to Jews. It is a threat, first and foremost, to Europe and to the freedoms it took centuries to achieve."

"When bad things happen to a group, its members can ask one of two questions: 'What did we do wrong?' or 'Who did this to us?' The entire fate of the group will depend on which it chooses. If it asks, 'What did we do wrong?' it has begun the process of healing the harm. If instead, it asks, 'Who did this to us?' it has defined itself as a victim. It will then seek a scapegoat to blame for all its problems. Classically this has been the Jews because for a thousand years they were the most conspicuous non-Christian minority in Europe and today because Israel is the most conspicuous non-Muslim country in the Middle East."

"Antisemitism means denying the right of Jews to exist as Jews with the same rights as everyone else. The form this takes today is anti-Zionism. Of course, there is a difference between Zionism and Judaism, and between Jews and Israelis, but this difference does not exist for the new antisemites themselves. It was Jews, not Israelis who were murdered in terrorist attacks in Toulouse, Paris, Brussels and Copenhagen. Anti-Zionism is the antisemitism of our time."

"Antisemitism, or any hate, become dangerous when three things happen. First: when it moves from the fringes of politics to a mainstream party and its leadership. Second: when the party sees that its popularity with the general public is not harmed thereby. And three: when those who stand up and protest are vilified and abused for doing so."

"A society, or for that matter a political party, that tolerates antisemitism, that tolerates any hate, has forfeited all moral credibility. You cannot build a future on malign myths of the past, you cannot sustain freedom on the basis of hostility and hate."

"Antisemitism is a prejudice that, like a virus, has survived over time by mutating. So in the Middle Ages, Jews were persecuted because of their religion. In the 19th and 20th centuries, they were reviled because of their race. Today, Jews are attacked because of the existence of their nation-state, Israel. Denying Israel's right to exist is the new antisemitism. And just as antisemitism has mutated, so has its legitimization. Each time, as the persecution descended into barbarity, the persecutors reached for the highest form of justification available. In the Middle Ages, it was religion. In post-Enlightenment Europe, it was science: the so-called scientific study of race. Today it is human rights. Whenever you hear human rights invoked to deny Israel's right to exist, you are hearing the new antisemitism."

"Antisemitism is the world's most reliable early warning sign of a major threat to freedom, humanity and the dignity of difference. It matters to all of us. Which is why we must fight it together."

"What is antisemitism? Let's be clear - not liking people because they're different isn't antisemitism. It's xenophobia. Criticizing Israel isn't antisemitism: it's part of the democratic process, and Israel is a democracy. Antisemitism is something much more dangerous - it means persecuting Jews and denying them the right to exist collectively as Jews with the same rights as everyone else."

Photo: Blake Ezra Photography / Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust

Responding to Antisemitism

in the Thought of Rabbi Sacks zt”l



Dr. Daniel Rose

Antisemitism was a theme Rabbi Sacks returned to often in his writings, broadcasts and speeches (including his last two speeches in the House of Lords). He argued that it is a pressing issue facing not only Jews across the world but society as a whole. “The hate that begins with Jews never ends with Jews,” he wrote. “Antisemitism is the world’s most reliable early warning sign of a major threat to freedom, humanity and the dignity of difference.”

In explaining the historical phenomenon of antisemitism, he gave us a framework for understanding, the tools to respond, and hope for a future without hate.

The mutating virus

Rabbi Sacks showed us that like a virus, a nefarious prejudice like antisemitism needed to mutate to survive and defeat the immune systems set up by cultures to protect themselves from hatred. In the Middle Ages, Jews were persecuted because of their religion, at first because they rejected Christianity, and later as a perceived demonic force in Europe, who were to blame for all the evils of the age (poisoned wells, spreading the plague, the ritual murder of Christian children, etc.)

However, in the age of reason of post-enlightenment Europe, no longer could a rationale for prejudice be based on religious belief. Jews instead became hated for their ethnicity, an alien race polluting the bloodstreams of Europe. This new form of pseudo-scientific, racial antisemitism led directly to the crematoria of the Holocaust.

Prejudice and hate always seek justification in a civilized society. This lowest form of evil must seek legitimation from the highest source of authority of the age. In the Middle Ages, this was religion, in post-enlightenment Europe it was science, and today it is “Human Rights.” So the antisemitism of our age is disguised as criticism of Israel that attacks Jews not as individuals but as a nation, directed against their nation-state.

What should our response be?

While encouraging the fight against antisemitism, Rabbi Sacks warned Jews not to internalize it. Antisemitism says everything about antisemites and nothing about Jews. It is a mistake to say that since we are hated because we are different, we should try as far as possible not to be

different. The best way for Jews to combat antisemitism is to wear our identity with pride.

But we cannot fight antisemitism alone. He urged Jews to stand together with other victims of hate and to find allies from other communities, to stand together with society as a whole against hate.

In defense of difference

He argued that antisemitism is the paradigm case of dislike of the unlike and fear of the other. The hatred of difference. For Rabbi Sacks, this is the quintessential role of the Jew – to be different and to teach the dignity of difference. Antisemitism is an assault not on Jews alone, but on the human condition. Life is sacred because each human is different and irreplaceable. A world without room for Jews is one that has no room for difference, and a world without space for difference has no space for humanity itself. Our response to antisemitism must be to honor the dignity of difference. This is the Jewish message to the world.

Dr. Daniel Rose is the Director of Education for the Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust.

Antisemitism can take many forms

Theological or religious antisemitism | Jews are persecuted because of their religious beliefs; they are portrayed as “Christ-killers” or forced to convert to Christianity or Islam.

Economic | Antisemitism rises due to the Jews’ financial and economic success; they are accused of being stingy and obsessed with money. This often includes the belief that Jews

run the business world and control the economy.

Racial antisemitism | The belief that Jews are of an inferior race, what was behind the Nazi ideology and the Holocaust.

Social or cultural antisemitism | Jews are considered socially inferior; they are accused of either not assimilating enough or of assimilating too much and their culture is shunned.

Political or ideological antisemitism | Jews are accused of being disloyal to their country or of harboring perverse and destructive political ideologies and are seen as the cause of political upheaval. Historically, Jews were accused by nationalists of creating communism, and by the communists as being capitalists.

Holocaust denial and conspiracy theories | The claim that Jews fabricated

the Holocaust or exaggerated the facts. Other conspiracy theories include the claim that Jews have a secret plot to take over and control the world or that Jews are the cause of Coronavirus or other calamities or natural disasters.

Anti-Zionism | Hatred or criticism of Israel is used to mask hostility toward Jews in general, even those disconnected from Israel.

Antisemitism Throughout History



6th Century

Yemenite Jews living under the Muslim Umayyads are considered “unclean” and forbidden from venturing outdoors
(SOCIAL/CULTURAL ANTISEMITISM)



1000s-1200s

Christian Crusades massacre Jews in Europe and Israel
(THEOLOGICAL/RELIGIOUS ANTISEMITISM)



1478

Spanish Inquisition
(THEOLOGICAL/RELIGIOUS ANTISEMITISM)



Medieval Europe

Jews accused of using Christian blood to bake their matzah, sparking blood libels
(ANTISEMITIC CONSPIRACY THEORIES)



1500s

European Jews restricted to reside only in sectioned off neighborhoods called ghettos
(SOCIAL/CULTURAL ANTISEMITISM)



19th Century

Caricatures portray Jews as greedy, powerful and money-hungry
(ECONOMIC ANTISEMITISM)



1925-1945

Hitler publishes *Mein Kampf*, claiming that the Aryan race is superior; later developments led to the Holocaust
(RACIAL ANTISEMITISM)



1903

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion published in Russia describes a secret Jewish plan for global dominion
(ANTISEMITIC CONSPIRACY THEORIES)



1947

The proposal of a Jewish State in Israel leads to pogroms and massacres of Jews in Muslim countries
(ANTI-ZIONISM)



Today

Jews and Jewish communities worldwide become the target of anti-Israel attacks
(ANTI-ZIONISM)