

Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

In addition, such manifestations could also target the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity.

Anti-Semitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for “why things go wrong.” It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.

Christian Anti-Semitism

According to the early fathers of the church, Jews were damned because they had killed Christ. For this reason, according to Eusebius of Caesarea, Jews could not rebuild the Jerusalem or the temple in Jerusalem, as their destruction had been visited upon them for killing the Messiah.

The Crusades became the occasion for wholesale slaughter of Jews in Germany and elsewhere despite the attempt of the Catholic Church to moderate the violence. During the Crusades and in other anti-Jewish riots, whole Jewish towns and Jewish quarters were burned and people were thrown from the walls of cities. Often Jews were rounded up in the synagogue and burned alive. This treatment has been characterized euphemistically by some modern Christian writers as “indignities suffered by the Jews.”

Modern European Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism was evident in the enlightenment writings of Voltaire and others. Edward Gibbon, who wrote the Decline and fall of the Roman Empire, stated in a footnote that Jews in Cyprus had rioted and engaged in capitalism.

Like many enlightenment figures, one of his complaints against the Christian religion was that it was derived from Judaism.

Modern anti-Semitism is associated with racial theories of 19th century in Germany, which insisted that Jews are a separate and inferior race. Adolf Stoecker, Wilhelm Marr, Richard Wagner and Heinrich von Treitschke were prominent anti-Semites.

Popular figures such as Mendelssohn, Heine and others who were converted Jews attracted the envy and suspicion of fellow Germans.

Russia became vigorously anti-Semitic. Pogroms (anti-Jewish riots) occurred in a number of cities and towns in the 1880s. These were ignored or encouraged by the authorities. The Tsarist secret police forged the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a document that claims to outline the secret plan of the Jews to conquer the world.

Arab/Muslim Anti-Semitism

Considering the treatment of Jews in European countries, the experience of Jews under Islamic rule was relatively benign, however, giving rise to the idea that Muslims, Jews and Christians lived in perfect harmony.

That is far from the truth, but it is true of the best of times and the best rulers in Islam, such as the Ottoman Sultans who invited Jews to settle in Turkey after they had been expelled by Spanish and Portuguese inquisitions, or to settle in communities such as Tiberias and Safed in the holy land.

Jews were generally despised as wily but weak people with no courage. For example, following the revolution of the Young Turks in Ottoman Turkey, Jews could serve in the army. A Turkish joke related that at great length it was possible to recruit and train a Jewish unit. They were then sent to the front. They returned quickly however, because they had been scared by a gang of bandits that they met on the road. A Muslim hadith (legend associated with the Qur'an) relates that in the end, Muslims will kill all the Jews, who will try to hide in trees. Only one sort of tree will agree to hide them however. This hadith is repeated in the charter of the Hamas organization, but it is of venerable origin.

In modern times, beginning in the 19th century, Muslim and Arab countries adopted European anti-Semitic themes such as the blood libel (an incident occurred in Damascus in 1840) and later, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, publication of Mein Kampf and other trappings of European Christian anti-Semitism such as the Holocaust denial.

Cartoons in Arab and Muslim media appear regularly and show Jews as having the characteristic "traits" of anti-Semitic portrayals such as best posture, beady eyes and hooked noses.

>> For Additional Reading:

Jewish Virtual Library

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/antisem.html

Simon Wiesenthal Center

www.wiesenthal.com/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=lsKWLbPJLnF&b=4441467&ct=12697485

Yad Vashem

www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205742.pdf

Gfca

www.gfantisemitism.org/Pages/default.aspx