



Modern Antisemitism: A Guide to Understanding and Tackling Hatred

Choose Your Words: Understanding Antisemitism, Anti-Zionism, and Anti-Israel Sentiment

WHAT ARE JEWS? WHAT ARE 'SEMITES?'

Jews are a people, descendants of a tribe, comprising a global cultural community and a religion. These multiple identities are expressed through a shared history, a shared heritage, cultural practices, values and a belief system, and a collective sense of peoplehood with a direct connection to a shared homeland: the Land of Israel.

Jews are occasionally referred to as a 'Semitic' people. The term 'Semite' refers to a specific geographical region, the Levant, with shared linguistic roots. Other Semitic peoples in this region include: Arabs, Phoenicians, Akkadians, etc. When the term 'antisemitism' is used, it is used specifically in reference to Jews, not to these other identified communities.

WHAT IS ANTISEMITISM?

Antisemitism is millennia-old hatred of the Jewish religion, the Jewish people and, most recently, hatred toward the existence of the Jewish state, Israel.

WHAT IS ANTI-ZIONISM?

There are multiple forms of Zionism: political, cultural, religious, socialist, and more. Zionism emerged in the 19th century as a response to both antisemitism and assimilation. The political formulation of Zionism is the collective liberation movement for Jewish self-determination. Political Zionism is the actualization of Jews building a Jewish nation-state in the Land of Israel. The State of Israel was established in 1948. The borders of Israel remain in dispute due to continued conflict. Historically, anti-Zionism was a political expression within Jewish communal discourse in the 19th and 20th centuries. Not all Jews are Zionists. However, anti-Zionism, in its current manifestation, suggests that Jews have no right to self-determination and the Jewish state ought to cease to exist. Often, anti-Zionism is motivated by antisemitism. Anti-Zionism can be cloaked under the guise of political language and human rights rhetoric. It is important to distinguish that anti-Zionism, in its present form, is not about criticizing Israeli policy and actions. The starting point for anti-Zionism usually begins with asking the question, "Does Israel have a right to exist?" When anti-Zionism flourishes, it can cultivate a climate that breeds hostility toward the State of Israel and the Israeli people. Calling for Israel's destruction is a form of hatred toward the collective Jewish people.

WHAT IS ANTI-ISRAELISM?

Israel is a modern nation-state and a member of the global community. Israel is both a Jewish and democratic state. Part of the normalization of Israel means that it is criticized by a variety of individuals: world leaders, journalists, academics, Israeli citizens, and Jews and non-Jews living outside of the state. Engaging in constructive criticism in order to improve policies and societal relationships, and debate political positions is an essential part of a healthy democracy. However, when Israel is delegitimized, demonized, dehumanized, discriminated against, held to a double standard, or when incitement of hate or violence against Israel is advocated, then we must ask ourselves what is happening. These are forms of anti-Israel animus and this hatred stifles substantive and nuanced discussions about Israel and Israeli society.

HOW HAVE THESE HATEFUL BEHAVIORS BEEN MANIFESTED THROUGHOUT HISTORY?

The first manifestation of antisemitism is Judeophobia, which is hatred toward the religion of Judaism and its adherents. Judeophobia has its roots during the Biblical period, the emergence of Christianity, and throughout the Middle Ages. In the 18th century, Judeophobia took a new turn: hatred of the Jewish people. The term 'antisemitism' was developed by Wilhelm Marr, a German, to target Jews as a distinct 'race' of people. The creation of the pseudo-science of eugenics was developed at this time to deprive Jews of civil rights by highlighting them as a subordinate race as compared to Aryans. Conversion to Christianity could not take away a Jew's inherent Jewishness as DNA is immutable.

The most egregious example of modern antisemitism on a grand scale was the Holocaust, the systematic mass murder of over six million Jews under the German Third Reich between 1939-1945. The Third Reich's policies were built on a system which espoused antisemitism and propagated it throughout their territorial conquests as part of Nazism's political platform. Nazi beliefs were predicated on traditional antisemitic tropes, including such ideas that Jews seek to both dominate and destroy society, and the accusation of dual loyalty, that Jews have allegiance to one another and their collective identity and cannot be loyal citizens to the countries in which they reside. These ideas have been used against Jews to scapegoat them for challenges and social ills within the host societies.

With the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, anti-Israelism and anti-Zionist rhetoric, language and behaviors have manifested themselves through political and social movements seeking to delegitimize Israel as a state. Detractors claim that Israel has no right to exist, and demonize it by comparing it to Nazi Germany or apartheid South Africa. Israel, unlike other nation-states, is subject to overt hostility in world institutions, the mainstream media, political discourse, religious communities, educational environments, and ideological positions. This hostility often reveals itself through direct threats calling for the destruction of the state, or the eradication of Israel's Jewish character. Oftentimes there are inaccurate characterizations of Israel's power, which harken back to antisemitic tropes about 'Jewish dominance' in society. When Israel is held to a different standard of behavior than other democratic states, it is necessary to question the ultimate motive and agenda.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are you willing to engage in conversation with people with whom you disagree? What might lead you to shut down a conversation? When you choose to engage with people with whom you disagree, what is your goal?
2. What are five or more ways to respond to an antisemitic statement?
3. Have you encountered antisemitism or anti-Zionism? If so, in what ways did they present themselves? At that moment, did you respond, and if so, how? Thinking back, what alternative responses can you think of?
4. If someone doesn't agree with Israeli control of the disputed territory (known as the West Bank or Judea/Samaria), is that anti-Zionism?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Organizations

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Articles

Lavalle, Guillaume and Blum, Michael. "Last Auschwitz Survivors Speak: 'We haven't won, but we've taught our grandkids.'" *The Times of Israel*, January 14, 2020. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/last-auschwitz-survivors-speak-we-havent-won-but-weve-taught-our-grandkids/>

Smith, Stephen. "Since We're Debating Labels, Stop Calling it Anti-Semitism. It's Jew Hatred." *The Forward*, July 7, 2020 <https://forward.com/opinion/450209/since-were-debating-labels-stop-calling-it-anti-semitism-its-jew-hatred/>

Sommer, Allison Kaplan. "Anti-antisemitism? A Battle Rages over the Jewish Hyphen." *Haaretz*, May 21, 2020. <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-anti-antisemitism-a-battle-rages-over-the-jewish-hyphen-1.8856789>

Books

Lipstadt, Deborah. *Antisemitism: Here and Now*

The award-winning author of *The Eichmann Trial and Denial: Holocaust History on Trial* gives us a penetrating and provocative analysis of the hate that will not die, focusing on its current, virulent incarnations on both the political right and left: from white supremacist demonstrators in Charlottesville, Virginia, to mainstream enablers of antisemitism such as political figures, to a gay pride march in Chicago that expelled a group of women for carrying a Star of David banner.

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*

Night is Elie Wiesel's masterpiece, a candid, horrific, and deeply poignant autobiographical account of his survival as a teenager in the Nazi death camps. This new translation by Marion Wiesel, Elie's wife and frequent translator, presents this seminal memoir in the language and spirit truest to the author's original intent. And in a substantive new preface, Elie reflects on the enduring importance of *Night* and his lifelong, passionate dedication to ensuring that the world never forgets man's capacity for inhumanity to man. *Night* offers much more than a litany of the daily terrors, everyday perversions, and rampant sadism at Auschwitz and Buchenwald; it also eloquently addresses many of the philosophical as well as personal questions implicit in any serious consideration of what the Holocaust was, what it meant, and what its legacy is and will be.

Weiss, Bari: *How to Fight Antisemitism*

On October 27, 2018, eleven Jews were gunned down as they prayed at their synagogue in Pittsburgh. It was the deadliest attack on Jews in American history. For most Americans, the massacre at Tree of Life, the synagogue where Bari Weiss became a bat mitzvah, came as a total shock. But antisemitism is the oldest hatred, commonplace across the Middle East and on the rise for years in Europe. So that terrible morning in Pittsburgh raised a question Americans can no longer avoid: Could it happen here?

Multimedia (Videos, Podcasts & More)**Rabbi Sacks on the Connection between Antisemitism, Anti-Zionism, Judaism, and Israel**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MloZvHU3wwg>

Auschwitz Death Camp: Oprah Winfrey & Elie Wiesel in Conversation

https://www.schooltube.com/media/Winfrey+%26+Wiesel+-+Auschwitz+%28Part+1%29/1_zyggjsr4

Eva Heyman's Diaries: <https://www.instagram.com/eva.stories/>

An Instagram account that recounts the dramatized real-life story of a Jewish girl murdered in a concentration camp, by imagining she had documented her days on a smartphone.

Ezra Klein Show: Antisemitism Now; Antisemitism Then (Vox Conversations)

<https://www.vox.com/2020/1/27/21083571/ezra-klein-international-holocaust-remembrance-day-antisemitism-deborah-lipstadt>

Viral: Antisemitism in Four Mutations: Explore the recent rise in antisemitism, which is increasing in ways not seen since the 1930s, in the U.S. and Europe, and hear first-hand accounts from victims, witnesses and others who have experienced it. <https://www.pbs.org/video/viral-antisemitism-in-four-mutations-1lwduo/>

Who Will Write Our History is a 90-minute documentary film about Emanuel Ringelblum and the Oyneg Shabes Archive, the secret archive he created and led in the Warsaw Ghetto. The film is based on the book of the same name by historian Samuel Kassow. <http://playmountproductions.com/wwwoh.html>

#AnneFrank - Parallel Stories: 2019 production on Netflix. Through her diary, Anne Frank's story is retold alongside those of five Holocaust survivors in this poignant documentary from Oscar winner Helen Mirren.

Hatred in Higher Education: Encountering Antisemitism on Campus

WHAT DOES ANTISEMITISM LOOK LIKE IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

Antisemitism on campus takes many forms. It can be the more traditional form of Jew hatred with graffiti swastikas on the campus quad, etched in library bathroom stalls or spray painted on Jewish fraternity and sorority houses. You may encounter antisemitism with Holocaust deniers invited to speak on campus by student organizations or outside interest groups. And you may also experience antisemitism under the guise of anti-Zionism, within social movements on campus; or the rejection of a Jewish student from participating or belonging to a specific student group on campus because of their Zionist affinities; or a student government resolution calling for the university administration to engage in boycotting, divesting or sanctioning companies that work in Israel and have an affiliation with the university. These are all present day manifestations of antisemitism within higher education.

WHAT IS THE BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT, AND SANCTIONS MOVEMENT?

The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement (BDS) began as a way for Palestinians to engage in civil action to draw attention to Israel's control of the territory of the West Bank/Judea and Samaria. Over time, the BDS movement has forged relationships with individuals, organizations, and political figures for the purpose of delegitimizing Israel's existence, not merely criticizing its control over the disputed territories. These delegitimization efforts take many forms: campaigns that deny Israel's right to exist, propaganda that demonizes Israel and compares its policies with Nazism, the use of language of apartheid and racism, the promotion of a single state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict ("from the River to the Sea/Palestine will be free") and holding Israel to double standards. The movement itself is made up of a loosely organized group of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals who pressure governments, private companies, universities, and others to impose economic sanctions on Israel; encourage them to boycott and divest from Israeli companies and boycott cultural and academic institutions and professors. BDS itself is the most well-known tool of this delegitimization campaign. The movement couches its goals in language intended to create a veil of legitimacy, while appealing to progressives professing to care deeply about human and civil rights. The BDS movement is ultimately anti-Israel and not pro-Palestinian.

On college campuses, BDS initiatives often involve the introduction of various divestment bills by anti-Israel student groups to student councils and governments. The organizations that tend to promote BDS resolutions include: Students for Justice in Palestine; Jewish Voices for Peace; and some Muslim student associations. While it is important to understand that these bills and provisions are rarely binding or capable of causing any type of major change at the university on a governance level, the strife and turmoil that often accompany their support on campus creates hostile environments for students.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you heard of the BDS movement? How would you explain, in your words, the objectives of this movement?
2. If you encounter antisemitic paraphernalia in the campus quad, what steps can you take? To whom can you turn for support?
3. If a professor has academic freedom, does that mean that he/she can say anti-Zionist and antisemitic statements in class, on their public blog, or in a public presentation for an advocacy group? If you see those, what steps can you take?
4. What organizations exist to help students navigate the challenges and opportunities on campus?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Articles

“Antisemitism and the Radical Anti-Israel Movement on U.S. Campuses, 2019.” The Anti-Defamation League. <https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/antisemitism-and-the-radical-anti-israel-movement-on-us-campuses-2019#policy-and-action-recommendations>

Elman, Miriam. “Antisemitism and Israel Delegitimization on the US Campus.” The Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University. <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/antisemitism-and-israel-delegitimization-on-the-us-campus/>

“Israel and the Left: Three Studies of the Crisis.” *Fathom Magazine*, June 2019. <https://fathomjournal.org/israel-and-the-left-three-studies-of-the-crisis-2-jewish-voice-for-peaces-antisemitic-deadly-exchange-campaign/>

Sharansky, Natan. “Why BDS Fails My 3D Test on Anti-Semitism.” *Newsweek*, 9/25/19. <https://www.newsweek.com/antisemitism-bds-natan-sharansky-3d-test-1461305>

Walzer, Michael. “Anti-Zionism and Anti-Semitism.” *Dissent*, Fall 2019. <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/anti-zionism-and-anti-semitism>

Organizations working with students on campus (a sampling):

Hillel on Campus

<https://www.hillel.org/>

Israel is at the heart of Hillel’s work. Hillel’s goal is to inspire every Jewish college student to develop a meaningful and enduring relationship to Israel and to Israelis. Whether they want to engage in deep dialogue or are politically active in mobilizing others to support Israel, Hillel enables students to share a rich connection to Israel and to each other as a people. Engaged and educated students can become committed Jewish adults who are passionate supporters of Israel.

Chabad on Campus

<https://chabadoncampus.org/>

Life on campus is busy, with tons of social events and clubs (plus classes and cramming, of course).

You may even find yourself rallying in support of a worthy cause or seeking a leadership role. Chabad on Campus offers tons of meaningful activities and programs for Jewish students in an environment without judgement. It's your chance to get involved, strengthen your roots, make new friends and make a difference.

Israel on Campus Coalition

<https://israelcc.org/>

The ICC inspires American college students to see Israel as a source of pride and empower them to stand up for Israel on campus. The ICC unites the many pro-Israel organizations that operate on campuses across the United States by coordinating strategies, providing educational resources, sharing in-depth research, and increasing collaboration.

Academic Engagement Network

<https://academicengagement.org/>

The Academic Engagement Network (AEN) is a national organization of faculty members and staff on American university and college campuses, which seeks to oppose efforts to delegitimize Israel, to support robust discussion, research, and education about Israel in the academy, to promote campus free expression and academic freedom, and to counter antisemitism when it occurs on campus.

Stand With Us

<https://www.standwithus.com/>

StandWithUs (SWU) is an international and non-partisan Israel education organization that inspires and educates people of all ages and backgrounds, challenges misinformation and fights antisemitism. SWU empowers and energizes students and communities with leadership training and educational programs on hundreds of college campuses, high schools, and middle schools. SWU informs through social media, print and digital materials, films, weekly newsletters and missions to Israel.

Books

Pessin, Andrew; Ben-Atar, Doron. ***Anti-Zionism on Campus: The University, Free Speech and BDS***. Many scholars have endured the struggle against rising anti-Israel sentiments on college and university campuses worldwide. This volume of personal essays documents and analyzes the deleterious impact of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement on the most cherished Western institutions. These essays illustrate how anti-Israelism corrodes the academy and its treasured ideals of free speech, civility, respectful discourse, and open research. Nearly every chapter attests to the blurred distinction between anti-Israelism and antisemitism, as well as to hostile learning climates where many Jewish students, staff, and faculty feel increasingly unwelcome and unsafe. *Anti-Zionism on Campus* provides a testament to the specific ways anti-Israelism manifests on campuses and considers how this chilling and disturbing trend can be combatted.

Multimedia

School Ties is a 1992 American drama. When David Greene (Brendan Fraser) receives a football scholarship to a prestigious prep school in the 1950s, he feels pressure to hide the fact that he is Jewish from his classmates and teachers, fearing that they may be antisemitic. He quickly becomes the big man on campus thanks to his football skills, but when his Jewish background is discovered, his worst fears are realized and his friends (Matt Damon, Chris O'Donnell) turn on him with violent threats and public ridicule.

From College Campuses to the ‘Real World’: How Antisemitism Spreads

WHAT IS THE CONCEPT OF INTERSECTIONALITY?

Intersectionality is a concept coined by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to describe how race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and other characteristics intersect and overlap. These identities and experiences create a framework to understand the complexity of the ways in which prejudice and discrimination are compounded. For example, if you are a woman of color, the lens of intersectionality suggests that one has to examine what it means to be a woman and a person of color within our society. Only then can one fully comprehend the ways in which that particular individual experiences and encounters the world.

Many progressive movements incorporate intersectional thinking into their organizational platforms and have utilized intersectional frameworks to advance a particular political agenda. The challenge for individuals who support Zionism and identify with Zionist causes is combatting the perception, within intersectional thinking, of Zionism as a colonialist and imperialist movement ultimately deemed to be oppressive. The intersectional framework utilized by some progressive movements does not recognize Jews as an identity group deserving minority status, but rather Jews are deemed to be part of the white, privileged majority.

Within some progressive movements, including: the Movement for Black Lives, aspects of the LGBTQ+ social movement, and some of the leaders of the Women’s March, Jews have not been openly welcomed and included if they hold positive views toward Israel and Zionism. There is an assumption by these progressive movements that one must denounce and distance themselves from Zionism in order to be invested in supporting marginalized communities (ie: Blacks, people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, and women).

WHAT DOES THE TERM ‘PINKWASHING’ MEAN?

‘Pinkwashing’ is a term used to criticize Israel for promoting an inclusive approach to the LGBTQ+ community as a cover for alleged human rights violations within the State. It provides a convenient excuse to Israel detractors who seek to undermine Israel as a democratic state that values liberalism. The countries within the Middle East region are not held to the same standards as Israel, and the LGBTQ+ communities within Middle Eastern countries are not protected or included within their societies.

WHAT IS 'THE DEADLY EXCHANGE' INITIATIVE?

'The Deadly Exchange' campaign blames Israel and its Jewish American supporters for fueling discriminatory policing practices against minority communities in America. The campaign utilizes antisemitic tropes about Jewish power in order to accuse Israel and Jewish American organizations of conspiring against people of color in America. 'The Deadly Exchange' suggests that professional development trips to Israel with American law enforcement (in the local community and on college campuses) are taught practices of racial profiling that are brought back to America to employ against marginalized communities.

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you understand the ways in which intersectionality engages progressive social movements? Are there potential opportunities for Zionists to utilize the intersectional frameworks? Can you imagine ways in which intersectionality can be a valuable framework for combatting antisemitism?
2. What are the ways in which antisemitism is politicized by the hard right and the hard left?
3. When navigating the complex conversations with family, friends, work colleagues, and others about antisemitism, what are useful ways for you to approach the subject?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Articles

"Erasive Antisemitism: A New Threat Arising Within Contemporary Progressive Discourse," by The Reut Group, March 15, 2021.

<https://www.reutgroup.org/Publications/ERASIVE-ANTI-SEMITISM>

"Black Lives Matter, American Jews, and Antisemitism: Distinguishing Between the Organization(s), the Movement, and the Ubiquitous Phrase." *Jewish Council For Public Affairs*, July 16, 2020. <https://www.jewishpublicaffairs.org/black-lives-matter-american-jews-and-antisemitism-distinguishing-between-the-organizations-the-movement-and-the-ubiquitous-phrase>

Rosenberg, Yair. "From Left to Right, Jewish Groups Condemn 'Repellent' Black Lives Matter Claim of Israeli 'Genocide.'" *Tablet Magazine*. August 5, 2016. <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/from-left-to-right-jewish-groups-condemn-repellent-black-lives-matter-claim-of-israeli-genocide>

"Chicago Dyke March's ban on Jewish Pride flags called antisemitic," by JTA Staff. June 28, 2017 <https://www.jweekly.com/2017/06/28/chicago-dyke-marchs-ban-on-jewish-pride-flags-called-anti-semitic/>

Ward, Eric. "Skin in the Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism." *The Public Eye*, Summer 2017. <https://www.politicalresearch.org/2017/06/29/skin-in-the-game-how-antisemitism-animates-white-nationalism>

Weiss, Bari. "Stop Being Shocked." *Tablet Magazine*. October 14, 2020. <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/stop-being-shocked>

Books

Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion*

Drawing on his twenty-five years of groundbreaking research on moral psychology, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt shows how moral judgements arise not from reason but from gut feelings. He shows why liberals, conservatives, and libertarians have such different intuitions about right and wrong, and he shows why each side is actually right about many of its central concerns.

Manji, Irshad. *Don't Label Me: How to DO Diversity Without Inflaming the Culture Wars*

Don't Label Me shows that America's founding genius is diversity of thought, which is why social justice activists won't win by labeling those who disagree with them. At a time when minorities are fast becoming the majority, a truly new America requires a new way to tribe out.

Multimedia

Interview with Enes Kanter of the Boston Celtics with Together Beat Hate

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WF1cn3wLeHM>