**A True Understanding**

**Jews became the target of hatred from those who opposed conscience and morality.**

**The Jewish View on Anti-Semitism**

Hitler introduced to mankind a unique strain of anti-Semitism. To the world at large, this brand of anti-Semitism seemed new, but there was nothing revolutionary about it to the Jews.

Long before any practical manifestation of anti-Semitism made its appearance in the world, the Torah made it known that anti-Semitism would play an integral role in Jewish history. In fact, we were told, Jews would be hated for exactly the reasons Hitler so brazenly outlined.

The Talmud (Tractate Shabbos 89) cites the source of anti-Semitism using a play on words: The Torah – the source of the Jewish system of laws, values and moral standards – was received at Mount Sinai. The Hebrew pronunciation of "Sinai" is almost identical to the Hebrew word for "hatred" – *sinah*. "Why was the Torah given on a mountain called Sinai?" asks the Talmud. "Because the great sinah – the tremendous hatred aimed at the Jew – emanates from Sinai."

At Sinai Jews were told that there is one God, Who makes moral demands on all of humanity. Consequently, at Sinai the Jewish nation became the target for the hatred of those whose strongest drive is to liberate mankind from the shackles of conscience and morality.

At Sinai the Jewish nation was appointed to be "a light unto the nations." There are those who embrace Jews and the Jewish faith because of that light; but there are also those who want the world to be a place of spiritual darkness. They object to morality. Those would-be harbingers of darkness attack the Jews as the lightning rod for their hatred.

Herman Rauchning had been Hitler’s personal confidante, but he abandoned Nazism and attempted to alert the free world to the scope and danger of the Nazi threat. He wrote:

It is against their own insoluble problem of being human that the dull and base in humanity are in revolt in anti-Semitism. Nevertheless Judaism, together with Hellenism and Christianity, is an inalienable component of our Christian Western Civilization – the eternal "call to Sinai," against which humanity again and again rebels. (*The Beast From the Abyss, by Hermann Rauchning)*

This "call to Sinai" – the message entrusted to and borne by the Jews – ultimately transforms the world. Yet it is this very message that draws forth the wrath of those who would give their last ounce of strength to resist it.

**The Real Reason for Hatred of Jews**

Why do people hate this message – the eternal "call to Sinai" – and harbor such animosity for those who carry it?

A great many people simply can’t cope with the burden of being good. However, when they act in ways that are bad, they can’t cope with the resultant feelings of guilt. Try as they may, they can never cut themselves loose from the standards of absolute morality dictated by the Torah. Stuck in this "Catch-22" situation, people turn with their mounting frustrations against the Jews, who they perceive as personifying humanity’s collective conscience.

Sigmund Freud recognized this tendency, and explained: "Jews are hated not so much because they killed Jesus, but because they produced him."

Thousands of years ago, before the Torah was given, people built their livesPagan idolPagan idol around philosophies that were based on their own concepts of right and wrong. Then, when the Jews entered the theological arena, they showed people all the mistakes they had been making:

Pagan gods are nonsense – there is only one God for all of mankind, Who is invisible, infinite and perfect. Infanticide and human sacrifice are unacceptable. Every human being is born with specific rights. No one can live as he pleases, for everyone must surrender his will to a higher Authority.

On a certain conscious level, people recognize the Jews’ message as truth. Those unwilling to embrace the truth have found that the only way to rid themselves of it is to destroy the messengers – for the message itself is too potent to be dismissed.

That is what is so irksome about the Jews, and that is why, for some people, nothing less than total destruction of the Jews will do. If Judaism were just another ideology, people could laugh it off and continue on their merry way. But deep in his soul, every human being recognizes the essential truths of morality – people can’t just laugh it off.

Any individual’s claim to superiority bothers people only to the extent that they believe it is true. If someone who is indisputably ugly saunters up to a nice-looking fellow at a party and says, "I’m better-looking than you," what would be the other’s response? More than likely he would simply shrug his shoulders and ignore him, because the comment would not bother him in the least.

If, on the other hand, the best-looking guy in the room comes up to the same fellow and makes the identical comment, that will raise his dander. The reason is that one doesn’t resent people who say they are superior; one resents people who are superior.

That is why the Christians’ hatred of the Jews was particularly intense. They, more than those of other religions, were threatened by the Jewish message. Jews said that Jesus was not God. This statement assumes a "wrongness" about Christianity. The Church Fathers understood that if the Jews are right, and they remain Jews, this implies that Christianity is bankrupt.

Therein lies Judaism’s colossal threat to Christianity. Other groups’ denial of Jesus is a great disappointment to Christians, but the Jews’ denial is intolerable. Jesus came to the Jews! The very group that produced him, those people who had the most knowledge and authority on such matters, those who represented the last word on religion – were the first to reject Jesus.

The Jewish threat to Christianity has nothing to do with their having "killed" Jesus. The source of Christian fear runs much deeper: Jewish existence invalidates the essential tenet of Christian theology.

What is this message that the Jewish people are bringing to the world, that so many find so threatening?

**The Jews: Light Unto the Nations**

The profound message that Jews bear to humanity has gained such widespread acceptance that people tend to take it for granted. Yet the ideas which originated at Sinai have literally changed the world.

Few people give much thought anymore to the source of the basic moral underpinnings of Western society. Concepts such as basic human rights, the notion that the sick and the elderly should be cared for – not murdered or left to die – and the idea of society assisting the poor and disadvantaged, all seem to "come naturally" nowadays.

In short, Jewish concepts have civilized the world.

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Any serious student of history who has gained some awareness of what world standards were like before the Jews came along can easily recognize the enormous impact that Judaism has had.

**How Do Non-Jewish Historians View Jews?**

Those who understand world philosophic trends prior to the advent of the Jewish influence can identify clearly that it was the Jews who moved the world away from paganism and toward standards of morality and justice.

**John Adams**, second president of the United States, wrote to a friend:

*I insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize men that any other nation . . . they are the most glorious nation that ever inhabited this earth … They have given religion to three-quarters of the globe, and have influenced the affairs of mankind more, and more happily, than any other nation, ancient or modern.* (Letter of John Adams to F.A. Van der Kemp, 1808; Pennsylvania Historical Society)

*C*hristian scholar and historian **Paul Johnson** wrote in his bestseller, *History of the Jews:*

*One way of summing up 4,000 years of Jewish history is to ask ourselves, what would have happened to the human race if Abraham had not been a man of great sagacity; or if he had stayed in Ur and kept his higher notions to himself, and no specific Jewish people had come into being. Certainly the world without the Jews would have been a radically different place.   
  
All the great conceptual discoveries of the intellect seem obvious and inescapable once they have been revealed, but it requires a special genius to formulate them for the first time. The Jews had this gift. To them we owe the ideas of equality before the law, both divine and human; of the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human person; of the individual conscience, and so of personal redemption; of the collective conscience, and so of social responsibility; of peace as an abstract ideal, and love as the foundation of justice; and many other items which constitute the basic moral furniture of the human mind.*

*In Ancient and Medieval History,* Hayes and Moon wrote:

*Only if you have some knowledge of the human sacrifices, the vicious temple rites, the degrading superstitions and customs that were practiced... can you realize how much the modern world owes to the Hebrew prophets, whose monotheism and moral teachings entered into Christianity and Islam...*

T.R. Glover highlighted this very idea in his book, *The Ancient World:*

*"Mankind – East and West, Christian and Muslim – accepted the Jewish conviction that there is only one God. Today it is polytheism that is so difficult to understand, that is so unthinkable."*

Jewish morals and ideals have gained near-universal acceptance. And with that, it has produced people virulently resistant to the Jewish message.

**Understanding Being Jewish**

The Jewish people can withstand almost any amount of persecution. Throughout history, Judaism has survived countless incidents of unspeakable prejudice and persecution. What is the secret to their persistent strength?

Philosopher Friedrich Neitzsche once said, "A human being can survive any *how*, as long as he has the proper *why*." That is to say, a person can tolerate any circumstance life sends his way, if only he understands the deeper meaning to that experience.

Over the millennium, the Jewish people have experienced enormous amounts of hatred – ultimately leading to genocide. And through it all, the Jewish people always held onto being Jewish. That is because they understood that it was worth it. They understood the meaning of being Jewish, and were willing to pay the price.

If the Jews would not have seen any meaning to their pain, it is unlikely they would have been willing to stand by their Jewish identity. That is why we find such widespread assimilation today – many Jews do not see why they should "lose out" on life and set themselves apart.

In other words, **Anti-Semitism + Ignorance = Assimilation**

If we can come to understand why Jews are so hated, we can understand who Jews are and, more important, who Jews can be. A powerful effort has been made to remove the Jewish element from anti-Semitism, and in doing so, to ignore the critical message anti-Semitism teaches about the uniqueness and preciousness of the Jew. This alone is a compelling reason for Jews to learn about anti-Semitism and what it means to be a Jew.

Although we don't live in Nazi Germany where they were murdering Jews, we do live in a world that is subtly anti-Semitic. Whether it's the U.N. condemnations or media bias against Israel, or violence against Jews in Europe today, hatred of the Jews is there. Subtle but persistent.

**"Carrot Top" Metaphor**

Jews know very clearly the burden of being Jewish. Without the beauty, without understanding the benefits of Judaism, they are going to say, "Let's get rid of this. Who needs this? I want to get out from under being Jewish."

Imagine you have a daughter, and finally the great day arrives when she is ready to go into first grade – to join the outside world, to join society for the first time. Like all young parents, you are nervous. You send her off to school, wondering: How will she be accepted? How will she fit in? Will she be socially adept and have friends, etc?

Coming home that day, you are excited to hear about your daughter's first day. But you see that she is crushed. You ask, "What's wrong?" She answers, "During recess all the kids made fun of me. They looked at my red hair and called me 'carrot top.' It was terrible!"

You are devastated. Your child's whole future, her self-esteem, is on the line. What's going to be? What can you do about it?

The easiest solution to this problem is to dye her hair. Presto! No longer a redhead, she's a brunette. The problem is eliminated!

What's the more difficult solution? To reframe it. To tell her: "No matter what they say about having red hair, it's not bad. It's beautiful! It's gorgeous! It's unique. It has flair and individuality. It's extravagant." You reframe it. And she has no more problems. Because her problem was not really a problem, only the misconception of others.

In truth, what's the worst possible thing you can do to this child? To dye her hair. Why? Because you are confirming her fears. You are telling her: "They are right. There really is something wrong with red hair. Let's get rid of it."

That's our situation. In one sense, being Jewish is like being born with red hair. It's not popular. There are people who will degrade us for it.

Unless every Jew has a strong understanding of the significance of being Jewish, then, by definition, he is not going to like being Jewish. He is not going to like himself.

What's the best way to get that alternative perception to being Jewish?

We have arrived at an understanding of anti-Semitism and its cause.

**The Cause is the Solution**

The solution to anti-Semitism is exactly the same as the cause: It is Jewish values and beliefs that cause anti-Semitism, and it will be Jewish values and beliefs that ultimately will eliminate anti-Semitism.

The message that the Jews bear is the recipe for conquering evil. The more effectively Jews transmit their special message, the closer they come to making a holocaust – whether aimed against Jews or against any other group – impossible.

Only when Jews act as Jews – only when the Torah's message of ethics and morality is known throughout the world – can we ever hope to experience a world in which evil has been eradicated.

Therein lies the exquisite irony of Jewish history. Although Jews posed no military, political or economic threat, and were never more than a tiny fraction of the world’s population, they were always a major power in the eyes of mankind. Why? Because of the message they carry – the Torah.

Jewish ideas influence the world, but the world cannot absorb the message properly unless the Messengers – the Jews – know it and teach it.

Instead of "Why the Jews," the question is really: “Why Be Jewish?”

The answer to that question is critical for yourself, for the Jewish people and, ultimately, for the world. When Jews must live in an anti-Semitic society, within the context of a past brimming with anti-Semitism, they must possess a strong inner sense of why their being Jewish is meaningful and worthwhile, and why it is worth the effort.

What's the best way to gain a positive, upbeat perception of being Jewish?

The answer is obvious: Jewish education.