

Reading 1, Level 7

Traditional Hatred of Judaism

Despite the fact that the term “antisemitism” was coined at the end of the 1870s, hatred for Jews and Judaism is ancient. As far back as the Hellenist-Roman world, monotheism and the self-contained way of life of the Jewish people created hostility within surrounding societies. Furthermore, this hostility grew markedly with the spread of Christianity. Leaders of the Jewish religion did not accept Jesus as the Messiah, and according to old Christian theology, Jews brought about his death. The symbol of the Jewish people in Christianity is Judas Iscariot, who is depicted as the one apostle who betrayed Jesus to the Roman authorities, and did so for money.

The accusation that Jews were responsible for Jesus’s crucifixion (known as “deicide”) was a collective burden of guilt carried by Jews for generations; their reduced political power over the centuries was seen as proof of Christianity’s superiority. Revulsion toward Jews, combined with the theological importance within early Christianity of the theory of deicide, served as the foundation for the complex attitude of the Church toward Jews, and it formed the basis for traditional hatred of the Jewish people.

During the Middle Ages, further negative components were added to the image of the “Jew” that intensified anti-Jewish hatred. The Jew was represented as possessing satanic powers, one who was involved in natural calamities, and as someone for whom injuring Christians and Christianity was a part of his way of life and religious practices. This led to false accusations against the Jews, among them, that Jews used Christian blood in the baking of their *matzo* [unleavened bread eaten on Passover], that Jews poisoned wells, and that Jews caused plagues. These accusations are known as “Blood Libels”.

European society of the Middle Ages forbade Jews from joining artisans’ guilds. As a practical matter, this barred them from engaging in many trades. Jews were also forbidden from owning land, which prevented them from farming. As such, Jews’ sources of livelihood were markedly limited. When Jews began to lend money and collect taxes on behalf of the nobility and secular rulers of Europe, two of the few professions allowed to them, anti-Jewish hatred increased. The accusation was that Jews avoided any kind of physical labor (though the reality was that they were prohibited from this labor), and were interested in nothing other than charging usurious rates of interest and making money.

Hatred based on the false notion that Jews controlled finance was quickly added to the prejudices and stereotypes that had arisen in the Middle Ages. These images, which originally were part of religious doctrine, became part of European culture. They found their way into the world of folklore, culture, and literature. Perhaps the best example of this is the character of Shylock, the Jewish money-lender, in Shakespeare's play "The Merchant of Venice".

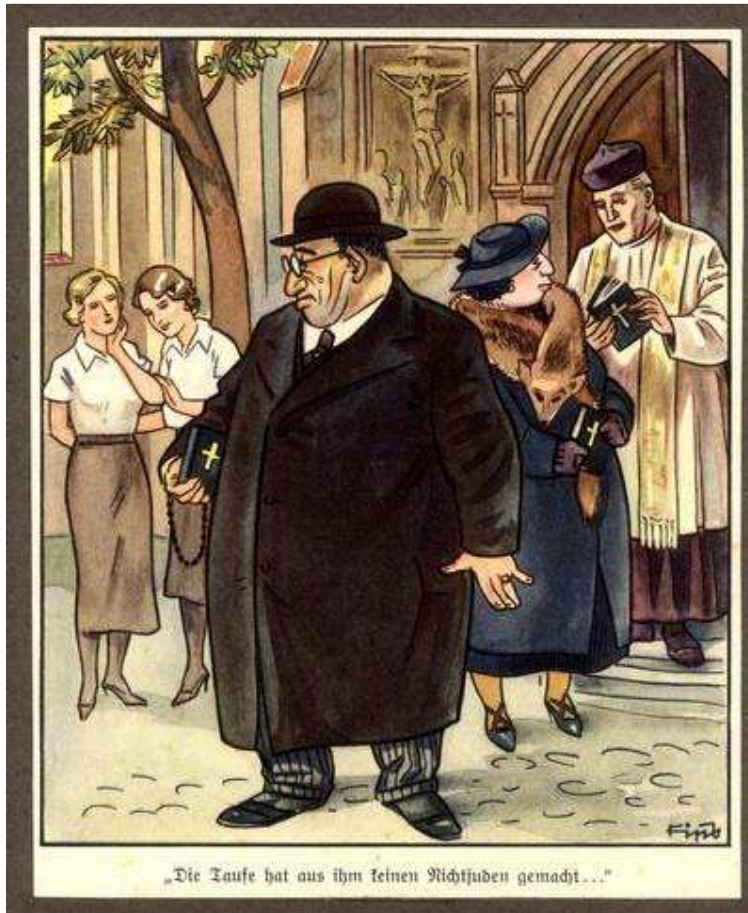
Modern Antisemitism in Germany

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the attitude toward Jews was altered by the atmosphere of Modernism and Enlightenment, as well as by the rise of various movements calling for the emancipation of Jews and their integration into the modern Christian states. In exchange for the equal rights that were promised to Jews, they were demanded to renounce their religious separation, and become "useful" citizens. Many Jews, particularly in [Germany](#), changed their traditional clothing, adopted the German language, and strove to be involved in German society and its culture. They also took part in the economic modernization processes that the State underwent, and above all, they adopted Germany as their homeland, particularly in the period following the unification in 1871.

In the wake of the secularization of European society, the religious accusation of deicide was weakened, and the strength of traditional antisemitism abated somewhat. The Modern Era, with its stress on reason, secularism, humanism and equality, was expected to replace all these ancient sentiments. However, modernization and nationalism, which allowed for the integration of Jews into their respective European countries, brought with it the rise of a new antisemitism, different from that which had previously existed. In 1859, biologist Charles Darwin wrote his revolutionary book, "On the Origin of Species." He maintained that in nature, animals and plants are subject to a law of natural selection and the survival of the fittest. Various ideologies began to apply this model to humans based on [racism](#), a theory that determined that each person's racial origin determines his/her worth. "Social Darwinism" and other theories divided the human race into "superior" and "inferior" races, and claimed that in a struggle for existence between these races, only the pure and superior race would survive. In this case, the Aryan nation was seen as superior.

Modern antisemitism claimed to analyze the position of Jews in society in an objective way, and made use of pseudo-scientific terms. It regarded Judaism not as a religion, but rather as a racial group, rejecting its ability to integrate into society. According to this view, all Jews possess negative characteristics common to their race. Since modern antisemitism posited that these traits were inherent, there was no way to renounce them. The negative traits of Jews, according to modern

antisemitism, were carried in the blood. As such, there was no way to get rid of them: once a Jew, always a Jew. Conversion to Christianity would not change the genetic characteristics of the Jew, as evidenced by the following picture:

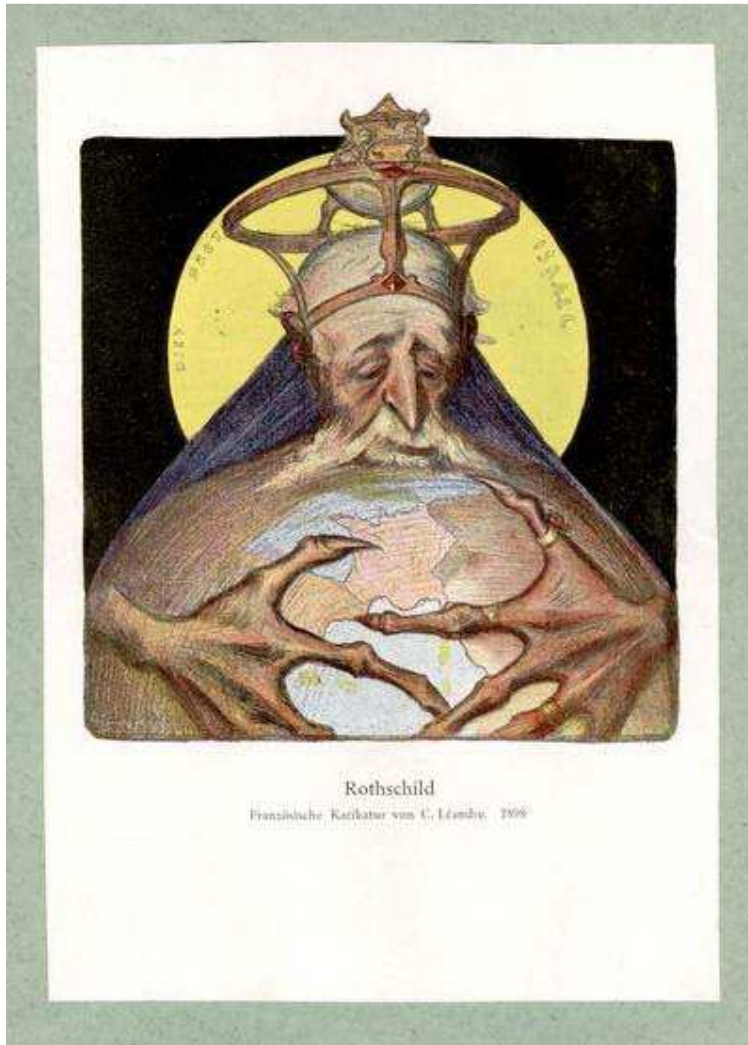


An Antisemitic Caricature, "Despite His Baptism, He Remains Jewish," from *The Poisonous Mushroom*. Yad Vashem Archives, 226/1599

The above picture depicts a Jew who had converted. It explains that the Jew cannot change his essence even if he converts, and therefore his conversion to Christianity is meaningless. An Antisemitic Caricature, "Despite His Baptism, He Remains Jewish," from a children's book called *The Poisonous Mushroom*, published by *Der Stürmer* in 1938, Yad Vashem Archives, 226/1599

At the same time that social Darwinism was on the rise, modernization, which had led to secularization, industrialization of the state, and increasing urbanization, left many Germans feeling alienated. Nationalistic, anti-liberal, and pseudo-religious approaches, which fed off these feelings, festered within German society. A number of German thinkers emphasized the mythical connection that existed among different parts of the German nation, and various folk movements called for a return to nature, expressing nostalgia for ancient German tribes. Along with the emphasis on characteristics common to their Germanic "nature," antisemitic rhetoric emphasized the foreignness of "the Jews" to the German nation and its tradition. In addition, they argued that Jews, just through the fact of their integration into Germany, cause much damage. According to their way of thinking, "the Jews" exploit the goodness of the German people, and take over society by worming their way into different branches, such as science, art, and journalism.

Jews were presented as members of a coordinated worldwide conspiracy aimed at destroying humanity. It was claimed that this so-called "International Judaism" uses its money and global connections to overthrow existing regimes. Accordingly, Jews were accused of "dual loyalty" – on the one hand, to their countries of citizenship, but on the other hand, to the dangerous organization of "International Judaism" which would lead them to betray the country in which they were citizens.



An 1898 French Antisemitic Caricature Depicting “Jewish [Domination” of the World](#). Yad Vashem Archives, 153/1599

The most outstanding example of this accusation is the publication of [The Protocols of the Elders of Zion](#). This is a forged composition originating in Russia, claiming to present the protocols, or meeting notes, of Jewish leaders who came together in a secret cabal, and planned to take over the world. The Protocols were supposedly evidence of this Jewish plot. According to antisemitic rhetoric, Jews employ capitalism, socialism, and universalism in order to undermine the societies in which they live. The text of the Protocols was published all over Europe, and even in the United States of America, where the person who underwrote its publication was none other than Henry Ford, the car manufacturer. It became the most widespread antisemitic publication, even to the present day.

In the final analysis, modern antisemitism claimed to unravel and solve the entanglement of problems afflicting modern society by blaming “the Jews.” The Jew, who was identified with modernization, capitalism, and urbanization, was regarded as the source of the misfortunes of those sectors of society that were harmed by these processes, and very quickly “the Jew” became the guilty party responsible for all the ills besetting humanity and modern society. “The Jew” was seen as the source of economic crises and depressions, the reason for political conflicts, and the cause of social unrest. In 1879, Wilhelm Marr, a German author, politician and agitator, wrote: “The social question is nothing but the Jewish question.” Marr was responsible for coining the term “antisemitism” and introducing it into the political lexicon. The term was based on the theory that Jews were a separate racial, as opposed to religious, group. Heinrich Von Treitschke, a nationalist German historian and politician, said in the same year: “The Jews are our misfortune” (German: *Die Juden sind unser Unglück*). This last slogan later became a major rallying cry for Nazi antisemitic propaganda, and was printed on each issue of this Nazi newspaper, *Der Stürmer* (The Attacker), published in Nuremberg, as can be seen on the bottom line of this picture from April 1929:

Der Stürmer

Nürnbergers Wochenblatt zum Kampfe um die Wahrheit
HERAUSGEBER: JULIUS STREICHER

Donnerstag, den 17. April 1929
Nürnberg, im April 1929
7. Jahrgang
1029

Die Hopfenjuden

Wie sie den Bauern entwürgen / Wie sie den Eidel verkaufen / Und wie sie enden

Es war ein heiterer und sonniger Tag, als der Jude mit der goldenen Waage in den Hof trat. Der Bauer schaute ihm nach, wie er die goldenen Münzen in die Waage schütete. Die Waage klang wie ein Geheul, als der Bauer die goldenen Münzen in die Waage schütete. Die Waage klang wie ein Geheul, als der Bauer die goldenen Münzen in die Waage schütete.



Zwillingersperachen im Nürnberger Biergarten

Aus dem Inhalt:
Der Heilige Geist hat sich in der Erscheinung offenbart...
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Der Heilige Geist hat sich in der Erscheinung offenbart...
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Der Heilige Geist hat sich in der Erscheinung offenbart...

Die Juden sind unser Unglück!

The First Page of an Issue of *Der Stürmer*, a Nazi Newspaper that was First Published in 1924. The caption on the bottom reads: "The Jews are our Misfortune!"

Yad Vashem Archives, 1149/4613

The paradox of modern antisemitism is that Jews were labeled as Liberals, Capitalists and Communists - all at the very same time.

Reading questions:

- a) Why are Jews blamed for Jesus' crucifixion?
- b) What trades were Jews barred from in the Middle Ages? Why?
- c) What new "form" of anti-Semitism replaced the older religious one in the 19th century?
- d) What was "The Protocols of the elders of Zion". How did this contribute to the worldwide "Jewish conspiracy"?