

# ANTISEMITISM: A HISTORY



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## Key Points



Historic antisemitism has primarily been a response to exaggerated fears of Jewish power and influence manipulating key events.



Antisemitic passages and decrees in early Christianity and Islam informed centuries of Jewish persecution.



Historic professional, societal, and political restrictions on Jews helped give rise to some of the most enduring conspiracies about Jewish influence.

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# Antisemitism: A History

Journalists and historians have warned about a “new antisemitism” in the twenty-first century United States comprising a repackaging of historic antisemitic tropes presented by the far right and the far left as part of a struggle between neo-fascism, anti-fascism, and anarchism. Both the far left and the far right are challenging the liberal world order established after World War II and targeting Jews as responsible for the ills during the post-war period. This has led to a worrisome trend of violent antisemitism such as the October 2018 Tree of Life synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the April 2019 attack on a Chabad house in Poway, California, the December 2019 attack on a kosher market in Jersey City, New Jersey, as well as an increase in antisemitic hate crimes.<sup>1</sup> To understand the modern incarnation of antisemitism requires an examination of the roots and evolution of institutional antisemitism and how it led to events such as the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust.

Historically, antisemitism has taken many forms. This report examines the origins of tropes and accusations against the Jewish community and how they have been repackaged and reused repeatedly. This report does not attempt to represent a comprehensive historic review of Jewish persecution. Instead, it aims to provide a broad overview, touching on the key themes that have persisted throughout history in order to contextualize modern antisemitism and assess whether society is indeed experiencing a “new” antisemitism or if history is simply repeating itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Yaroslav Trofimov, “The New Anti-Semitism,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 12, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-new-anti-semitism-11562944476>; Aaron Heller, “Anti-Semitic attacks spike, killing most Jews in decades,” Associated Press, May 1, 2019, <https://apnews.com/0457e96b9eb74d30b66c2d190c6ed7e5>.

## Religion and Antisemitism

The three main monotheistic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—share a common history rooted in the Jewish Bible, the Torah, also known as the Five Books of Moses. Both Christianity and Islam claim to be the fulfillment of what Judaism began. Christianity holds that Jesus is the messiah prophesied in the Torah and prophetic writings. Islam contends that Muhammad was the last in a line of prophets that included Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Christianity and Islam acknowledge their historical roots in Judaism and base their own validity on the idea that Jews have either rejected God or have been rejected by God, allowing room for the creation of new covenants presented by those religions.

The holy books of both Christianity and Islam have been influential in informing enduring antisemitic tropes. Norman A. Beck, a professor of theology and classical languages at Texas Lutheran University, documented 900 separate instances of what he referred to as “anti-Jewish polemic” in the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> In November 2018, the European Jewish Congress called for labels to be attached to the New Testament, the works of Martin Luther, the Quran, and other religious writings, warning that they may include antisemitic passages. The Congress called for “introductions that emphasize continuity with Jewish heritage of both Christianity and Islam and warn readers about antisemitic passages in them.”<sup>3</sup>

The following sections examine passages of the New Testament and the Quran and how they have been used to form the foundations of antisemitism within Christianity and Islam.

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<sup>2</sup> Norman A. Beck, “Removing Anti-Jewish Polemic from our Christian Lectionaries: A Proposal,” Jewish-Christian Relations, accessed September 4, 2019, [http://www.jcrelations.net/Removing\\_Anti-Jewish\\_Polemic\\_from\\_our\\_Christian\\_Lectionaries\\_A\\_Proposal.2179.0.html?L=3&pdf=1](http://www.jcrelations.net/Removing_Anti-Jewish_Polemic_from_our_Christian_Lectionaries_A_Proposal.2179.0.html?L=3&pdf=1).

<sup>3</sup> Stoyan Zaimov, “Require Bible publishers to add ‘anti-semitic’ warnings to New Testament, Jewish groups say,” Christian Post, November 26, 2018, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/require-bible-publishers-to-add-anti-semitic-warnings-to-new-testament-jewish-groups-say.html>.

## The Origins and Inspirations of Christian Antisemitism

The roots of Christian antisemitism can be traced to two main—but related—beliefs: The Jewish rejection of Jesus as the messiah and Jewish complicity in the death of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> This section will first examine sources of antisemitism within the New Testament of the Christian Bible, followed by an exploration of how these passages and themes have shaped Christian-Jewish relations and Christian antisemitism over the centuries.

Jewish rejection of Jesus has been a historical point of contention between Christians and Jews for centuries. At odds with the core of Christianity, the Jewish people reject both Jesus as the messiah and any divinity attributed to him. Jewish religious authorities conclude that Jesus failed to fulfill the biblical prophecies that would qualify him as the messiah.<sup>5</sup>

Jewish rejection of Jesus has spurred two primary responses: The label of Jews as Christ-killers and the belief that Jewish souls are condemned to Hell and must therefore be saved. Both these themes are illuminated in the New Testament, such as in this passage in the Book of Romans:

Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. I can testify that they have a zeal for God, but it is not

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<sup>4</sup> Gerard S. Sloyan, "Christian Persecution of Jews over the Centuries," U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed November 28, 2018, <https://www.ushmm.org/research/about-the-mandel-center/initiatives/ethics-religion-holocaust/articles-and-resources/christian-persecution-of-jews-over-the-centuries/christian-persecution-of-jews-over-the-centuries>; "Blood Libel," U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed November 28, 2018, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/blood-libel>.

<sup>5</sup> Shraga Simmons, "Why Jews Don't Believe in Jesus," Aish HaTorah, March 6, 2004, <https://www.aish.com/jw/s/48892792.html>.



enlightened. For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to God's righteousness.<sup>6</sup>

Jewish rejection of Jesus forms the basis for the Jewish persecution of Jesus, which is the second theme prevalent throughout the New Testament that has made a lasting impact. Throughout history, certain passages of the New Testament have been used to promote the idea that Jews sought or participated in the death of Jesus.

The Gospels paint a picture of Jews as a whole plotting the death of Jesus, and also plotting excommunication of Jesus's followers: "His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue."<sup>7</sup> The seventh chapter of John describes Jesus fleeing the Jews because "the Jews were looking for an opportunity to kill him."<sup>8</sup> Later on, the Jews are actively plotting to kill Jesus: "So from that day on they planned to put him to death."<sup>9</sup>

Recounted throughout the Gospels is the story of Pilate offering a crowd of Jews the opportunity to free Jesus, but the crowd instead chooses to free the criminal Barabbas. In the Gospel of Mark, Pilate comes to the realization that the chief priests of Israel had turned Jesus over to the authorities out of jealousy. According to the gospel, Pilate asked a crowd of Jews if they wanted him to "release for you the King of the Jews?," but the chief priests "stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead."<sup>10</sup> Luke 23 further illustrates:

Then they all shouted out together, "Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!" (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had

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<sup>6</sup> Rom. 10:1-3 (New Revised Standard Version).

<sup>7</sup> John 9:22 (New Revised Standard Version).

<sup>8</sup> John 7:1 (New Revised Standard Version).

<sup>9</sup> John 11:53 (New Revised Standard Version).

<sup>10</sup> Mark 15:1-15 (New Revised Standard Version).

taken place in the city, and for murder.) Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!” A third time he said to them, “Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him.” But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.<sup>11</sup>

Early Christianity struggled to address the issue of the Jews, whose scriptures they believed provided support for Jesus’s messianic role and the simultaneous Jewish rejection of Jesus, which hindered the religion’s legitimacy. The Roman destruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E. reinforced the idea among early Christians that God had rejected the Jews because they had rejected Jesus as their messiah.<sup>12</sup> In the Book of Acts, the Apostle Peter admonished the people of Israel as he and John raised up a lame man outside the Temple:

When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, “You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Luke 23:18-25 (New Revised Standard Version).

<sup>12</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012), 25.

<sup>13</sup> Acts 3:12-15 (New Revised Standard Version).



The role of Jews in condemning Jesus has been both a major source of Christian antisemitism and an area of debate within Christian doctrine. The story of Jesus's crucifixion at the hands of the Jews is the central event of the Passion of the Christ, a depiction of the final hours of Jesus's life leading up to his death and resurrection. The Passion was first performed as a play in Medieval Europe and notoriously portrayed Jews as the villains behind Jesus's death. According to theology professor Philip Cunningham, in Religion News Service (RNS), "Passion plays often combined the most negative 'anti-Jewish' elements from the four Gospels into a composite narrative that was more hostile to Jews than any single Gospel alone."<sup>14</sup> Cunningham further said that Christianity had for centuries adopted the notion that in order for Christianity to be true, Judaism had to be false.<sup>15</sup> In 1988, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) issued a set of criteria for depicting the Passion.<sup>16</sup> This was the culmination of decades of reform within the Church in terms of its relations with Jews and other non-Christians that began in the late 1950s.

On January 25, 1959, Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council, also known as Vatican II. The Church's first ecumenical council in almost 100 years drew between 2,000 and 2,500 bishops to Rome through the 1960s for a series of discussions on how to reform Church doctrine and how the Church engaged with non-Catholics.<sup>17</sup> One of the new doctrines to emerge from Vatican II was *Nostra Aetate* in October 1965, which redefined the Church's relations with the Jewish people. The document acknowledged that Jews largely did not accept the Gospel after Jesus's

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<sup>14</sup> A. James Rudin, "Christians, Jews and the dubious history of the Passion play," Religion News Service, March 27, 2018, <https://religionnews.com/2018/03/27/christians-jews-and-the-dubious-history-of-the-passion-play/>.

<sup>15</sup> A. James Rudin, "Christians, Jews and the dubious history of the Passion play," Religion News Service, March 27, 2018, <https://religionnews.com/2018/03/27/christians-jews-and-the-dubious-history-of-the-passion-play/>.

<sup>16</sup> "Criteria for the Evaluation of Dramatizations of the Passion," U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1988, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/jewish/upload/Criteria-for-the-Evaluation-of-Dramatizations-of-the-Passion-1988.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Jordan G. Teicher, "Why Is Vatican II So Important?," NPR, October 10, 2012, <https://www.npr.org/2012/10/10/162573716/why-is-vatican-ii-so-important>.

death and “not a few opposed its spreading,” but also recognized that “God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers....”<sup>18</sup>

The document went on to embrace the classic Christian position of replacement—that God formed a new covenant with Christianity that replaced the covenant with the Jewish people. But at the same time, it sought to redefine Christian-Jewish relations. Under *Nostra Aetate*, “any presentations that explicitly or implicitly seek to shift responsibility from human sin onto this or that historical group, such as the Jews, can only be said to obscure a core gospel truth.”<sup>19</sup> *Nostra Aetate* recognized the centrality of the Passion narrative to Christianity, but while it presented the Jewish leaders of the time as responsible for Jesus’s death, it rejected the position that all Jews shared responsibility for the crime.<sup>20</sup>

*Nostra Aetate* created a new paradigm for Christian-Jewish relations, but it did not end the promulgation of negative Jewish stereotypes using the Passion.

## The Origins and Inspirations of Islamic Antisemitism

Islamic leaders have frequently stated that Islam holds no ill will toward Jews and that any conflict is solely with Israel and Zionists. In a January 1998 interview with CNN, Iranian President Mohammad Khatami called antisemitism a “Western phenomenon”

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<sup>18</sup> “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate* – Proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965,” The Holy See, October 28, 1965, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html).

<sup>19</sup> “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate* – Proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965,” The Holy See, October 28, 1965, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html).

<sup>20</sup> “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate* – Proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965,” The Holy See, October 28, 1965, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html).

with “no precedents in Islam or in the East. Jews and Muslims have lived harmoniously together for centuries.”<sup>21</sup> This does not match the tone of Islamists who regularly and specifically single out Jews as a whole. In 2009, for example, [Muslim Brotherhood](#) ideologue [Yusuf Qaradawi](#) described the Holocaust as “divine punishment” for the Jews—whom he described as “Allah’s enemies”—and prayed that their next divine punishment would be at the hand of the Muslims.<sup>22</sup> Qaradawi is but one of many religious propagandists from the Muslim Brotherhood, [al-Qaeda](#), [Hamas](#), and other Islamic extremist groups who have labeled Jews as enemies of Islam and Allah. This extreme interpretation of the Jews and their relationship with God can also be found in Islamic texts.

The Quran acknowledges that God sent down the Torah and the Christian Bible and encourages Christians and Jews to practice their religions.<sup>23</sup> Muslims believe that the angel Gabriel revealed the Quran to Muhammad in the seventh century of the Common Era.<sup>24</sup> But the Quran also contains multiple passages that describe Jewish rejection of God’s laws and God’s subsequent rejection of the Jews, which includes the famous comparison of Jews to apes and pigs that frequently is repeated in antisemitic diatribes by Islamist radicals. In April 2018, 300 high-profile French leaders called for the removal of outdated sections of the Quran that encouraged antisemitic and Islamist violence. French Muslims rejected the call as blaming the entire religion of Islam for the statements and actions of the extremist minority.<sup>25</sup> The following section will examine some of the most widely cited passages and how they have been used to form the basis for antisemitism within Islam.

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<sup>21</sup> “Transcript of interview with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami,” CNN, January 7, 1998, <https://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9801/07/iran/interview.html>.

<sup>22</sup> “Sheikh Yousuf Al-Qaradhawi: Allah Imposed Hitler On the Jews to Punish Them – ‘Allah Willing, the Next Time Will Be at the Hand of the Believers,’” MEMRI, February 3, 2009, <https://www.memri.org/reports/sheikh-yousuf-al-qaradhawi-allah-imposed-hitler-jews-punish-them-%E2%80%93-allah-willing-next-time>.

<sup>23</sup> M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. *The Qur’an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), xxiv.

<sup>24</sup> M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. *The Qur’an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), ix-xxxvi.

<sup>25</sup> Agence France-Presse, “French Muslims blast anti-Semitism letter as attack on Islam,” Times of Israel, April 24, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/%E2%80%8Bfrench-muslims-blast-anti-semitism-letter-as-attack-on-islam/>.

## The Status of Jews Within Islam

Unlike Christianity, Islam did not directly spring from Judaism. The Quran contains several—some contradictory—passages about the Jews and their covenant with God. Early on in Sura 2, the Children of Israel are exhorted to “remember how I blessed you. Honour your pledge to Me and I will honour my pledge to you.”<sup>26</sup> Later on, however, the Quran is explicit that Muslims have become the successors to the People of Israel because Jews failed to heed God’s messengers and laws:

Before you people, we destroyed whole generations when they did evil—their messengers brought them clear signs but they refused to believe. This is how we repay the guilty. Later We made you their successors in the land, to see how you would behave.<sup>27</sup>

The passage is clear that Muslims are “successors” to those past generations that received prophecies. This is clearly a reference to the Jewish people, as the Quran speaks elsewhere of how Jews rejected divine warnings and prophecies.

Jews have a protected status within Islamic scripture and are known as People of the Book. This moniker typically refers to Jews and Christians but has been applied to other religions as well throughout Islamic history.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the Quran begins with an address to the Children of Israel, encouraging them to maintain their faith in what they have been given.<sup>29</sup> When living under the rule of Islamic law (“*dar al-Islam*”), the People of the Book are referred to as *ahl al-dhimmah* (“people of protection”) or *dhimmi* (“protected person”).<sup>30</sup> It is necessary to understand what this means in both theory and in practice, which have often been inconsistent.

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<sup>26</sup> M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. *The Qur’an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2:40, 7.

<sup>27</sup> M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. *The Qur’an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 10:13-14, 129.

<sup>28</sup> M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. *The Qur’an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), xxiv-xxv.

<sup>29</sup> M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. *The Qur’an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2:40-52, 7-8.

<sup>30</sup> *Jihad and the Islamic Law of War* (Amman: Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007), 40.

According to the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in [Jordan](#), ahl al-dhimmah encompasses two general categories: those living amongst a Muslim population in an Islamic state under the laws and customs of that population; and those living in an autonomous area with their own laws and customs but still under the broader aegis of an Islamic state. In the first case, dhimmis are subject to the dominant civil laws but are generally left to manage their own religious affairs. They are not required to serve in the military to protect the Islamic state.<sup>31</sup> They are, however, subject to a separate tax known as the *jizyah*, which is a poll-tax in exchange for not providing military service. The *jizyah* is based on the Quran's Sura 9:29, which calls for Muslims to fight those who do not believe in Allah or hold by one of the faiths of the People of the Book until they "give the *jizyah* willingly while they are humbled."<sup>32</sup>

In the case of dhimmis residing in autonomous areas, the people agreed not to join the enemies of the Islamic state in exchange for living autonomously.<sup>33</sup> This largely resulted in Jews living relatively peacefully in Islamic-ruled areas, although the results also included bloody conflicts and massacres carried out against Jews.

In the early days of Islam, Muhammad himself entered into a contract with Jewish tribes as Islam expanded out from Mecca. Shortly after Muhammad arrived in the city of Medina in 622 C.E., he and his followers entered into the Constitution of Medina with local tribes there, representing the first multi-religious contract under Islamic authority. Under the terms of the contract, non-Muslims could freely practice their religion while living under the civil laws of the new community and did not have to fight in the religious wars of the ruling Muslims. They did, however, have to fight in any civil military conflict. The constitution makes several specific references to Jews, guaranteeing that no Jew

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<sup>31</sup> *Jihad and the Islamic Law of War* (Amman: Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007), 41-42.

<sup>32</sup> M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. *The Qur'an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 9:29, 118

<sup>33</sup> *Jihad and the Islamic Law of War* (Amman: Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007), 41-42.

will be wronged for being a Jew, that those Jews who accept Muslim rule will receive civil benefits, and that no aid would be given to the enemies of Jews who accept Muslim rule.<sup>34</sup> Despite these assurances, Jews living in Muslim countries were subjected to numerous restrictions. In [Yemen](#), for example, Jews could not build their houses higher than a Muslim's house. Synagogues were also required to be constructed lower than mosques.<sup>35</sup>

## Jewish Rejection of God and Islam

Like within Christianity, Islamic antisemitism draws upon the concept of Jewish rejection. Multiple passages of the Quran speak to Jewish rejection of past prophets and God's laws. According to the Quran, God has rejected the Jews who have rejected Him. Sura 2:87-89 describes this punitive rejection by God.<sup>36</sup>

Several passages of the Quran describe the Jewish rejection of God's laws as handed down through the Israelite prophets. In turn, Sura 2:61 relays that God rejected the Jews, who "rejected his messages and killed prophets" and "disobeyed and were lawbreakers."<sup>37</sup> For this, the rebellious Jews were "struck with humiliation and wretchedness, and they incurred the wrath of God...."<sup>38</sup> While Islam does not elevate Jesus to as high a level as does Christianity, it does view him as one in a line of prophets that also includes Abraham, Moses, Isaac, and Joseph. Like the Bible, the Quran takes a hardline view of the Jewish rejection of Jesus:

Those Children of Israel who defied [God] were rejected through the words of David, and Jesus, son of Mary, because they disobeyed, they persistently

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<sup>34</sup> "Full Text of the Madina Charter," Constitution Society, accessed August 27, 2019, <https://www.constitution.org/cons/medina/macharter.htm>; "Constitution of Medina," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed August 28, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Constitution-of-Medina>.

<sup>35</sup> "Jewish Badge: Origins," U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed September 9, 2019, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jewish-badge-origins>.

<sup>36</sup> M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. *The Qur'an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2:87-89, 11.

<sup>37</sup> M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. *The Qur'an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2:61, 9.

<sup>38</sup> M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. *The Qur'an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2:61, 9.



overstepped the limits, they did not forbid each other to do wrong. How vile their deeds were! You [Prophet] see many of them allying themselves with the disbelievers. How terrible is what their souls have stored up for them! God is angry with them and they will remain tormented. If they had believed in God, in the Prophet, and in what was sent down to him, they would never have allied themselves with disbelievers, but most of them are rebels.<sup>39</sup>

The very next verse states that Muslim believers, Jews, Christians, and “all those who believe in God and the Last Day and do good—will have their rewards with their Lord.”<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, the Quran continues to expound on the idea of Jewish rejection of God and warns that Jews may attempt to lead Muslims astray. Sura 3:69 cautions against “[s]ome of the People of the Book” who “would love to lead you astray....”<sup>41</sup>

The language is similar to that used in the Old Testament regarding Pharaoh. God “hardened” the hearts of the Jews, just as with Pharaoh when he disobeyed God by refusing to release the Israelites from slavery. This can reinforce the interpretation of the Quran that concludes Jews have become the enemy of God, just as had Pharaoh. This theme is reinforced elsewhere in Sura 5, where Muhammad is instructed that he is “sure to find that the most hostile to the believers are the Jews and those who associate other deities with God....”<sup>42</sup>

Muslim Brotherhood ideologue [Sayyid Qutb](#) commented on Sura 5:51-52 in the fourth volume of his *The Shade of the Qur'an* book series. He wrote that “Jews are mentioned ahead of the idolaters in being most hostile to the believers, and their hostility is open and easily recognized by anyone who cares to pay attention....”<sup>43</sup> Qutb wrote that by

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<sup>39</sup> M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. *The Qur'an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5:78-81, 75.

<sup>40</sup> M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. *The Qur'an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2:62, 9.

<sup>41</sup> M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. *The Qur'an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3:69, 39.

<sup>42</sup> M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. *The Qur'an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5:82, 75.

<sup>43</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an Vol. IV* (Holybooks.com, 2012), 183, [https://holybooks-lichtenbergpress.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/volume\\_4\\_surah\\_5.pdf](https://holybooks-lichtenbergpress.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/volume_4_surah_5.pdf).

mentioning the Jews first, the Quran emphasizes “the fact that the Scriptures have not changed the Jews and that they are just the same as the unbelievers in their ardent hostility towards the believers.”<sup>44</sup> According to Qutb, the Jews are even more hostile toward Muslims than idolaters. Qutb accused the Jews of scheming against Muslims and waging an “unabated war” against Islam, Muhammad, and the Muslim community that has continued for more than 14 centuries.<sup>45</sup>

Qutb goes on to accuse Jews of breaking their agreements with Muhammad, rejecting God’s laws, and waging an ideological war against Islam on the scale of the Crusades. He blamed Jews for the sexual revolution and atheism, adding that the “most evil theories which try to destroy all values and all that is sacred to mankind are advocated by Jews.”<sup>46</sup> While Qutb repeated various antisemitic tropes about Jewish power and global domination conspiracies, he cited Quranic support for his assertions, such as Sura 5:82, which declared the Jews “the most hostile to those who believe....”<sup>47</sup> Qutb went on to declare that only “Islam and its followers” could defeat the “wicked and most vile nature” of the Jews throughout history, and only the full implementation of Islam in people’s lives will save the modern world from the “wicked nature.”<sup>48</sup>

Interpreted literally without textual or historical context, certain passages of the Torah and the Talmud can be used to draw negative conclusions about how the Jewish people view and interact with gentiles. But just as these sections do not represent the views of Jews, neither do controversial sections of the Quran represent the views of all Muslims. Nonetheless, extremists will comb their religion’s primary sources for anything that may

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<sup>44</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur’an Vol. IV* (Holybooks.com, 2012), 183, [https://holybooks-lichtenbergpress.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/volume\\_4\\_surah\\_5.pdf](https://holybooks-lichtenbergpress.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/volume_4_surah_5.pdf).

<sup>45</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur’an Vol. IV* (Holybooks.com, 2012), 183, [https://holybooks-lichtenbergpress.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/volume\\_4\\_surah\\_5.pdf](https://holybooks-lichtenbergpress.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/volume_4_surah_5.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur’an Vol. IV* (Holybooks.com, 2012), 185, [https://holybooks-lichtenbergpress.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/volume\\_4\\_surah\\_5.pdf](https://holybooks-lichtenbergpress.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/volume_4_surah_5.pdf).

<sup>47</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur’an Vol. IV* (Holybooks.com, 2012), 184, [https://holybooks-lichtenbergpress.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/volume\\_4\\_surah\\_5.pdf](https://holybooks-lichtenbergpress.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/volume_4_surah_5.pdf).

<sup>48</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur’an Vol. IV* (Holybooks.com, 2012), 186, [https://holybooks-lichtenbergpress.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/volume\\_4\\_surah\\_5.pdf](https://holybooks-lichtenbergpress.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/volume_4_surah_5.pdf).

justify their actions. In this way, Islamists have used the Quran to argue that the Jews are enemies of Islam and all Muslims.

## **Antisemitism Throughout History**

Understanding the origins of Christian and Islamic antisemitism provides the foundation for examining the historical timeline of antisemitism throughout European, Middle Eastern, and U.S. history. Historically, antisemitism has largely been a Western phenomenon, as Jews migrated from the Middle East to Europe and the Americas. Christianity and Islam both built empires that shaped the European continent, which in turn affected the role of Jews throughout the Western Hemisphere. Jews also traveled eastward toward Russia where they suffered persecution and became the object of global conspiracy theories. The following section examines how antisemitism manifested during Christianity's spread from the Middle East through the Roman Empire and the ascendancy of the Catholic Church, to the Islamic conquest of Europe, the European Enlightenment, and the rise of Communism in the twentieth century.

This section does not provide a complete timeline of the Jewish people, nor does it record every major antisemitic incident. Instead, this section provides an overview of the progression of antisemitism in the Common Era, examining the sources of major and recurring antisemitic themes such as the blood libel, Jewish greed and capitalism, and communism.

### **First Century through Eleventh Century: Rome and the Rise of Christianity**

Early Christianity remained largely a localized Middle Eastern religion as Christians were concerned about their own survival. The Roman Empire viewed Christians with suspicion for refusing to sacrifice to the pagan gods and instead worshipping a long

dead Jewish criminal. Both Christians and Jews faced persecution within the Roman Empire. Roman Emperor Constantine (a.k.a. Constantine the Great) changed the perception of Christianity and the course of human history in approximately 312 C.E. when he converted to Christianity. And as the emperor does, so do his subjects. Though Constantine's conversion did not signal an immediate shift in the perception of Christianity in the Roman Empire, Christianity eventually spread throughout the empire as a result.<sup>49</sup>

The basis for Christian-Jewish relations up to and including Vatican II can be traced back to Augustine of Hippo (a.k.a. Saint Augustine), considered one of Christianity's most influential thinkers, whose life spanned the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth.<sup>50</sup> Augustine wrote in his treatise *The City of God* that God had condemned the Jews to wander the earth as a punishment, like the biblical Cain. The Church accepted this interpretation, which became the basis for Christian-Jewish relations for hundreds of years.<sup>51</sup> However, Augustine's views of the Jews evolved as he grew older. In the fifth century, Augustine declared that the Jews provided living proof of Jesus and the New Testament through their centuries of devotion to the Old Testament.<sup>52</sup>

## Sixth Century through Eighth Century: The Khazars and the Birth of an Enduring Conspiracy Theory Attacking Jewish Identity

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<sup>49</sup> Sophie Lunn-Rockliffe, "Christianity and the Roman Empire," BBC, February 17, 2011, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/christianityromanempire\\_article\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/christianityromanempire_article_01.shtml).

<sup>50</sup> David Van Biema, "Was Saint Augustine Good for the Jews?," *Time*, December 7, 2008, <http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1864878,00.html>.

<sup>51</sup> Judah M. Rosenthal, "The Talmud on Trial: The Disputation at Paris in the Year 1240," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 47, no. 1 (1956): 58-76.

<sup>52</sup> David B. Green, "This Day in Jewish History 1242: France Burns All Known Copies of the Talmud," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), June 17, 2013, <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-1242-all-talmuds-in-paris-are-burned-1.5281064>.

Beginning in the sixth century, a Turkic people from the Caucasus Mountains area between the Black and Caspian seas amassed an empire in Eurasia that attracted exiles from Palestine and surrounding areas due to its position along the Silk Road and other trade routes. Known as the Khazars, the kingdom's citizens allegedly converted en masse to Judaism in the eighth century following the lead of the Khazar rulers. The Khazar kingdom collapsed in the thirteenth century and its citizens migrated to Eastern and Central Europe where they continued to mix with local populations.<sup>53</sup> This gave rise to a conspiracy theory that modern Ashkenazi Jews—who represent a large segment of Jews worldwide—are not, in fact, the Jews of the Bible, but rather products of the Khazars and their mass conversion.

White supremacist and neo-Nazi groups have latched onto the idea that modern Jews are not, in fact, descended from the ancient Israelites as an attack on Jewish identity and continuity. A search of the term “Khazar” on the neo-Nazi forum Stormfront returns thousands of hits. According to former [Ku Klux Klan](#) leader David Duke, once a proponent of the Khazar hypothesis, the theory gained popularity among anti-Zionists after World War II in order to dispel links between modern Jews and the land of Israel (then Palestine).<sup>54</sup> The Khazar theory has also garnered attention from groups such as the Black Israelites and the Nation of Islam. Founded in the eighteenth century, the Black Israelites is an African-American movement that believes its members are the true descendants of ancient Israelites and white people descended from the Edomites, a biblical antagonistic nation descended from Esau.<sup>55</sup> The Nation of Islam, led by Louis Farrakhan, holds that modern Ashkenazi Jews are false Jews descended from

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<sup>53</sup> Andrew Beider, “Ashkenazi Jews Are Not Khazars. Here’s The Proof,” *Forward*, September 25, 2017, <https://forward.com/opinion/382967/ashkenazi-jews-are-not-khazars-heres-the-proof/>; Eran Elhaik, “The Missing Link of Jewish European Ancestry: Contrasting the Rhineland and the Khazarian Hypotheses,” Oxford University Press, December 14, 2012, <https://academic.oup.com/gbe/article/5/1/61/728117>.

<sup>54</sup> David Duke, “Rethinking the Khazar Theory!,” DavidDuke.com, November 15, 2016, <http://davidduke.com/rethinking-khazar-theory/>.

<sup>55</sup> Sam Kestenbaum, “Who are the Black Israelites at the center of the viral standoff at the Lincoln Memorial?,” *Washington Post*, January 22, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2019/01/22/who-are-black-israelites-center-viral-standoff-lincoln-memorial/>.

Germans, whom he has called “the worst people in the world in their hatred,” second only to white Americans.<sup>56</sup>

The complete truth about the Khazar Empire and its relationship to the Jewish people may never be known. Indeed, even Duke has renounced the faith he once put into the Khazar theory, though not for any philo-Semitic reasons. He has argued that Jews themselves promote the theory to dispel the notion that they are indeed a tribal race that condemns gentiles.<sup>57</sup> Despite Duke’s repudiation, the theory remains persistent among the far right.

## Tenth Century through Twelfth Century: Continued Conquests and the Crusades

Jewish life in Palestine after the initial Islamic conquest was impacted by several other conquests during the tenth and eleventh centuries. In 970, the Fatimids—a Shiite Muslim caliphate in North Africa—conquered Palestine. In 1073, the Turkish Seljuks conquered Palestine from the Fatimids, who reconquered Jerusalem in 1098.<sup>58</sup>

While various Islamic armies traded Palestine between them, the Catholic Church was also planning to conquer Palestine for Christianity. In the year 1095 C.E., Pope Urban II

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<sup>56</sup> “Minister Farrakhan Reveals Truth About Trump, Weinstein, Antisemitism & Black America,” YouTube video, 2:55:54, posted by “Nation of Islam” on May 28, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTGBgleaStc>.

<sup>57</sup> David Duke, “Rethinking the Khazar Theory!,” DavidDuke.com, November 15, 2016, <http://davidduke.com/rethinking-khazar-theory/>.

<sup>58</sup> Eli Barnawi ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 84-85.



initiated the first Crusade to reclaim the Holy Land from its Muslim rulers.<sup>59</sup> In 1096, the Crusaders captured Jerusalem.<sup>60</sup>

Though the Crusades were meant to liberate Palestine from Islamic rule, Crusaders decimated Jewish communities along the way. The Crusades were particularly devastating for the Karaite sect of Judaism. The Karaites are a division of Jews who observe only the written law, the Torah, and reject the Oral Law. The Karaites emerged in Palestine after the Muslim conquest as an alternative to the growing rabbinical Judaism. In the year 1099, Crusaders destroyed the Karaite community in Jerusalem by burning people there alive—alongside Jews who held by the rabbinic traditions. Today, a Karaite community of fewer than 10,000 still resides in Israel.<sup>61</sup> After the conquest of Jerusalem, the Crusaders would ransom Jewish prisoners and prayer books to other Jewish communities.<sup>62</sup>

As the Crusades continued through the next century, the Catholic Church became increasingly antagonistic toward Jewish communities. Jews helped defend the cities of Haifa and Tyre against the invading Crusaders and were ultimately slaughtered. Unlike in Haifa, after the 1123 conquest of Tyre, the Crusaders gave the Jews the option of leaving the city with their possessions or remaining. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were marked by a series of Jewish expulsions and reappearances in Jerusalem and other areas of Palestine. Previously expelled by the Crusaders, Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem after Saladin, a Sunni Muslim, conquered the city in 1187. But Jerusalem's Jews were expelled again after the city returned to Crusader control in

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<sup>59</sup> Joshua Levy, "How the Crusades Affected Medieval Jews in Europe and Palestine," MyJewishLearning.com, accessed November 28, 2018, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-crusades/>; Gerard S. Sloyan, "Christian Persecution of Jews over the Centuries," U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed November 28, 2018, <https://www.ushmm.org/research/the-center-for-advanced-holocaust-studies/programs-ethics-religion-the-holocaust/articles-and-resources/christian-persecution-of-jews-over-the-centuries/christian-persecution-of-jews-over-the-centuries>.

<sup>60</sup> Eli Barnawi ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 85.

<sup>61</sup> Eli Barnawi ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 88-89.

<sup>62</sup> Eli Barnawi ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 108.

1229 after the Treaty of Jaffa, though the Turks would reclaim the city in 1244 and the Mongols would later capture Jerusalem in 1260.<sup>63</sup>

## Twelfth Century: Proliferation of the Blood Libel, Increasing Restrictions, the Talmud on Trial

One of the most pernicious and enduring conspiracy theories created against Jews is the blood libel, the accusation that Jews use the blood of gentiles in the preparation of *matzah* (unleavened bread), for human sacrifice, or for other rituals. While the origins of the blood libel are traceable to biblical times, the conspiracy became ingrained across Europe beginning in the twelfth century and would continue for hundreds of years.<sup>64</sup>

The first recorded reference to the blood libel dates to 1144 in Norwich, England. A Christian boy named William was found dead in the forest outside of Norwich during the week of Easter, which coincided with the Passover holiday.<sup>65</sup> His family accused Jews of murdering the child because of their hatred for Christianity. The charge went largely unheeded, however, until a monk named Thomas of Monmouth raised the issue in 1149. Thomas claimed he had received a deathbed confession from a witness to the crime, testimony from William's aunt, and an account from a Jewish-born monk who claimed he and every other Jew in England knew that William would be sacrificed on Good Friday. Thomas went on to claim that Jews had used William to re-enact the crucifixion of Jesus. News of young William's death then spread through England and blaming Jews for Christian losses became ingrained in the propaganda used to recruit soldiers to the Crusades. William's grave in Norwich became a pilgrimage site as Thomas sought to have William canonized.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Eli Barnawi ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 108-109.

<sup>64</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012), 83.

<sup>65</sup> Larry Domnitch, "Passover and Blood Libels," My Jewish Learning, accessed September 23, 2019, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/blood-libels/>.

<sup>66</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012), 75-80.

The blood libel continued to spread throughout Europe and was usually spurred by the disappearance of a young child. Accusations of ritual murder against Jews again spiked in 1235, when Jews in the German town of Fulda were accused of murdering five Christian children for their blood on Christmas Day.<sup>67</sup> More claims that Jews were using the blood of Christian children in their rituals began to surface and spread. Accusations that Jews were re-enacting the crucifixion led to a proliferation of charges around the Easter holiday, which typically coincides with the Jewish holiday of Passover. By the fourteenth century, the blood libel had become intertwined with Passover and the accusation that Jews were using blood in the preparation of matzah.<sup>68</sup>

Spurred by persistent accusations that Jews were draining Christian blood, Emperor Frederick I issued a 1236 edict absolving Jews of the blood libel and noting that Jewish religious texts forbid the consumption of blood, whether it be human or animal.<sup>69</sup> In the 1270s, Pope Gregory X called for the end of the blood libel and accusations of ritual murder against the Jews.<sup>70</sup> Despite these actions, the blood libel has remained a consistent accusation against the Jewish people. In 1475 in the Italian city of Trent, authorities arrested and tortured Jews into confessing to the murder of a missing child, Simon.<sup>71</sup> As later sections will discuss, the blood libel resurfaced in the nineteenth century in the Arab world and has continued since then as a recurring accusation.

By the twelfth century, the Catholic Church had become a powerful political entity and the arbiter of law across Europe. The feudal kingdoms that developed after the fall of

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<sup>67</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012), 83-85.

<sup>68</sup> Larry Domnitch, "Passover and Blood Libels," My Jewish Learning, accessed September 26, 2019, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/blood-libels/>.

<sup>69</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012), 83-85.

<sup>70</sup> Brian Tierney, *The Middle Ages: Sources of Medieval History* sixth edition, revised, Vol 1 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1999), 259-260.

<sup>71</sup> John-Paul Pagano, "Blood Libel: The Conspiracy Theory That Jews Are 'Anti-Human,'" *National Review*, September 23, 2019, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2019/09/blood-libel-anti-semitism-conspiracy-theory/>.

the western Roman Empire pledged fealty to the Catholic Church. Church doctrine and edicts influenced the behavior of the monarchs of England, [France](#), and [Spain](#). This was also a unique period in Jewish history, where proselytization flourished, leading Christian leaders to fear that Jews were trying to steer Christians away from the faith. In 1120, Pope Calixtus II issued a papal bull protecting Jews and their rights to practice their faith so long as they did not try to “subvert the Christian faith.”<sup>72</sup> Mainstream Judaism has since widely abandoned proselytization of gentiles.

The Church cemented its authority in 1215 when Pope Innocent III convened the Fourth Lateran Council. The ecumenical council defined the Catholic hierarchy, deciding that ultimate authority rested with the pope and then the patriarchs of—in order—Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. The council also addressed rights and expectations required of Jews and Muslims. Notably, it required Jews and Muslims to wear distinctive clothing to distinguish themselves from Christians, another antisemitic marker that has been used throughout history.<sup>73</sup>

The Church has issued several decrees across the centuries forcing Jews to physically distinguish themselves. In 1257, Jews in Rome were again forced to wear identifiable Jewish badges.<sup>74</sup> Jews living in Muslim-ruled lands had also been required to wear distinctive clothing or markers. In 1555, for example, Pope Paul IV decreed that all Jewish men should wear yellow hats, while women were forced to wear yellow scarves.<sup>75</sup> The Nazis would later emulate this practice when they forced Jews to sew yellow stars on their clothing and reside in ghettos.

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<sup>72</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012), 87-89.

<sup>73</sup> Henri Leclercq, “Fourth Lateran Council (1215),” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 9 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), accessed September 23, 2019, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09018a.htm>.

<sup>74</sup> “Rome,” Beit Hatfutsot – The Museum of the Jewish People, accessed September 20, 2019, <https://dbs.bh.org.il/place/rome>.

<sup>75</sup> “Rome,” Beit Hatfutsot – The Museum of the Jewish People, accessed September 20, 2019, <https://dbs.bh.org.il/place/rome>.

Also, in the twelfth century, the Church began to attack Jewish ritualistic and legalistic traditions, using biblical text as justification. In the Book of Matthew in the New Testament, Jesus scolded rabbis for raising their traditions above the authority of the Written Law (i.e., the Torah):

Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands before they eat.” He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ... So for the sake of your tradition you make void the word of God....”<sup>76</sup>

The tradition Jesus referred to here is the Oral Law (*Torah she-be`al peh*, or “Torah that is upon the mouth”), which Judaism holds was given by God alongside the Torah in order to explain the written laws found within it. For example, in Deuteronomy Moses instructs the Jews to perform kosher slaughter but the Torah does not elaborate on the exact methods. The explanation of how to carry out the practice (“*shechita*” in Hebrew) is found in the Oral Law. According to the editors of the Stone Edition ArtScroll Series *Chumash* (the printed collection of the Five Books of Moses), the in-depth explanations within the Oral Law are to prevent deliberate and accidental misinterpretations of the Torah.<sup>77</sup>

The Oral Law was canonized in the form of the Talmud beginning in the second century C.E. The Talmud is divided between two different works: the Mishnah—legal rulings expounding on laws given in the Torah—and the Gemara—a legal companion of sorts that includes rabbinical commentaries, debate, and rulings on various sections of the Mishnah.

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<sup>76</sup> Matthew 15:1-3 (New Revised Standard Version).

<sup>77</sup> Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, eds., *The Chumash* (New York: Mesorah Publications Ltd., 2006), xxiii.

The contents of the Talmud have historically been a source of antisemitic conspiracy theories and allegations that Jewish scripture dehumanizes non-Jews and permits Jews to cheat gentiles. The Talmud remained a source of mystery for Christian leaders until the thirteenth century, when the Catholic Church put the Talmud on trial in what became known as the Disputation of Paris of 1240.

The Trial of the Talmud began with a Jewish convert to Christianity who not only renounced his faith, but seemingly sought revenge against it. In 1236, French Jewish apostate Nicholas Donin traveled to Rome and denounced the Talmud before Pope Gregory IX. Donin had several years earlier been excommunicated from his community in La Rochelle, France, and subsequently converted to the Franciscan Order. He argued before the pope that the Talmud negatively portrayed the Virgin Mary and denounced the divinity of Jesus. In response, Gregory issued an order to religious leaders and the kings of France, Spain, Portugal, and England to seize all copies of the Talmud.<sup>78</sup>

This order was largely ignored except in France. King Louis IX ordered a public debate on the Talmud, with Donin representing the prosecution and four of France's leading rabbis—including the rabbi who had initially excommunicated Donin—defending the tome. This disputation took place between May and June of 1240 and, unsurprisingly, resulted in victory for the Church's prosecution of the Talmud and Donin's accusations. On June 6, 1242, Louis ordered all copies of the Talmud in France to be collected and destroyed. More than 24 wagonloads of books—an estimated 10,000 volumes of the Talmud—were burned on June 17.<sup>79</sup> Given that the printing press had yet to be

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<sup>78</sup> David B. Green, "This Day in Jewish History 1242: France Burns All Known Copies of the Talmud," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), June 17, 2013, <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-1242-all-talmuds-in-paris-are-burned-1.5281064>; Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2012), 90-91.

<sup>79</sup> David B. Green, "This Day in Jewish History 1242: France Burns All Known Copies of the Talmud," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), June 17, 2013, <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-1242-all-talmuds-in-paris-are-burned-1.5281064>; Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2012), 90-91; William Nicholls, *Christian Anti-Semitism: A History of Hate* (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1993), 244-245.



invented, this represented the destruction of thousands of hours of work producing the handwritten manuscripts.<sup>80</sup>

The success of France's Disputation of the Talmud, in combination with the historic blood libel, caused Europeans to increasingly view Jews with suspicion. This eventually led to the evolution of the classic blood libel into accusations of various secret Jewish conspiracies against gentiles.

Such conspiracies spread rapidly across Europe in the fourteenth century as Europeans panicked in the face of the bubonic plague that was racing across the continent. Between 1347 and 1350, the plague—a.k.a. the Black Death because of the swelled black marks left on victims—killed between one-third and two-thirds of Europe's population, approximately 20 million to 25 million people, though the exact number remains unknown. Religious authorities viewed the plague as divine punishment, which led to widespread prayers and fasting among Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike in the Middle East. The plague had the opposite effect in Europe, however, where Christians condemned Jews as being responsible for the disease.<sup>81</sup>

There are two predominant theories as to why Jews became popular scapegoats for the plague in Europe. Jews were, of course, affected by the plague as well but not at as high a rate in the beginning. Historians attribute this to the outbreak striking in the weeks before Passover, when Jews were removing grain from their homes, leaving little food for the rats that were spreading the plague.<sup>82</sup> The truth about how the plague was

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<sup>80</sup> David B. Green, "This Day in Jewish History 1242: France Burns All Known Copies of the Talmud," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), June 17, 2013, <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/premium-1242-all-talmuds-in-paris-are-burned-1.5281064>; William Nicholls, *Christian Anti-Semitism: A History of Hate* (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1993), 244-245.

<sup>81</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2012), 93-98; Michael Omer-Man, "This Week in History: The Jews of Basel Are Burnt," *Jerusalem Post*, January 14, 2011, <https://www.jpost.com/Features/In-Thespotlight/This-Week-in-History-The-Jews-of-Basel-are-burnt>.

<sup>82</sup> Donald C. McNeil Jr., "Finding a Scapegoat When Epidemics Strike," *New York Times*, August 31, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/01/health/01plague.html>.

being spread was unknown to the masses at the time, however, and people saw only that Jews were not being infected at rates similar to Christians. The other theory is related to the role of Jews in fourteenth-century Europe. Jews were excluded from many professions and largely were involved in finance and moneylending because Christianity officially viewed charging interest as sinful. Though not all Jews were moneylenders, Jews dominated the profession because it was one of the few available to them. And that earned them scorn by poor Europeans who found themselves in debt to Jewish lenders charging high interest rates on behalf of European nobility. These factors led to the proliferation of desperate accusations that Jews were poisoning wells and causing the outbreak, particularly in the areas now comprising [Germany](#), France, and Switzerland.<sup>83</sup>

In July 1348, Pope Clement VI issued two papal bulls absolving the Jews of responsibility for the plague, pointing out that they were also dying from the disease. He wrote that anyone accusing Jews of causing the plague “had been seduced by that liar, the devil.”<sup>84</sup> Nonetheless, this failed to calm the masses who were looking for any relief and, of course, the source of their misery. The blood libel originally accused Jews of using Christian blood for their religious practices out of deviousness and a hatred of gentiles. The fourteenth century ushered in an evolution of the blood libel that accused Jews of poisoning entire Christian communities rather than kidnapping individual Christians.

This led to violent retaliation against European Jews. In the Swiss cities of Bern and Zofingen, Jews were tortured into confessing that they had poisoned the waters. On January 9, 1349, the people of the city of Basel rounded up the city’s Jews and burned

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<sup>83</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2012), 93-101; Michael Omer-Man, “This Week in History: The Jews of Basel Are Burnt,” *Jerusalem Post*, January 14, 2011, <https://www.jpost.com/Features/In-Thespotlight/This-Week-in-History-The-Jews-of-Basel-are-burnt>.

<sup>84</sup> David B. Green, “This Day in Jewish History 1348: Jews Aren’t Behind the Black Death, Pope Clarifies,” *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), July 6, 2016, <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-1348-jews-aren-t-behind-the-black-death-pope-clarifies-1.5405782>.

600 Jewish adults alive. Basel then passed a decree forbidding Jews from entering the city for 200 years. Just over a month later, on February 14, authorities in Strasbourg, along the French-German border, arrested all Jews and burned them on platforms in the city. Those who were willing to convert were spared, but in all some 2,000 Jews were murdered. Strasbourg also banned Jews from entering the city for 100 years. Both cities' banishments were repealed a few decades later.<sup>85</sup> Other massacres of Jews followed in Germany and around Europe.<sup>86</sup>

Contemporaneously, a group of Christians known as the flagellants began traveling from town to town, praying and publicly flagellating themselves in order to earn God's mercy. The group traveled for 33 ½ days to coincide with Jesus's age at the time of his crucifixion. And where the flagellants traveled, anti-Jewish violence followed, including more forced confessions under torture and violent retaliations against Jewish communities. Some historians estimate that mob violence destroyed approximately 200 Jewish communities, both large and small, during the Black Death.<sup>87</sup>

## Twelfth Century Through Fifteenth Century: European Expulsions and the Inquisition

Beginning in the late twelfth century, the kingdoms of Europe began a series of expulsions of their Jewish populations. In France in 1182, King Philip Augustus ordered Jews out of the areas surrounding the capital. Many Jews returned in 1198 with an

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<sup>85</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2012), 93-98; Michael Omer-Man, "This Week in History: The Jews of Basel Are Burnt," *Jerusalem Post*, January 14, 2011, <https://www.jpost.com/Features/In-Thespotlight/This-Week-in-History-The-Jews-of-Basel-are-burnt>; David B. Green, "This Day in Jewish History 1349: A Valentine's Day Massacre in Alzace," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), February 14, 2013, <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/premium-1349-a-valentine-s-day-massacre-1.5229805>.

<sup>86</sup> Donald C. McNeil Jr., "Finding a Scapegoat When Epidemics Strike," *New York Times*, August 31, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/01/health/01plague.html>.

<sup>87</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2012), 97; Donald C. McNeil Jr., "Finding a Scapegoat When Epidemics Strike," *New York Times*, August 31, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/01/health/01plague.html>.

additional tax levied upon them. On July 18, 1290, King Edward I issued an order expelling the Jews of England. In 1394, France expelled its Jewish community, which sought refuge in territories ruled by the Ottoman Empire. Between 1426 and 1450, Jews in the Rhineland and Bavaria migrated to Ottoman lands after expulsion. After Muhammad II captured Constantinople in 1453 and made it the new capital of his empire, Jews expelled from Anatolia, Macedonia, and Bulgaria made their way to Constantinople. Jews who fled the Iberian Peninsula in the 1490s after the Spanish expulsion and forced conversions in Spain also sought out Constantinople. In the sixteenth century, Constantinople's Jewish community became the largest in the world.<sup>88</sup>

French monarchs carried out a series of expulsions of French Jews. In 1289, Jews were expelled from the cities of Anjou, Maine, Gascony, and Nevers. Many traveled to Paris, but in 1306 King Philip ordered all Jews to leave the country. King Louis X later readmitted the Jews in 1315 but forced them to wear identifying clothing and banned them from moneylending. Charles IV ordered another expulsion in 1321, and Charles VI ordered a final expulsion in 1394. Many French Jews migrated to the Iberian Peninsula, comprised of Spain and Portugal, where one of history's most famous Jewish expulsions would occur in the next century.<sup>89</sup>

Muslims first conquered the Iberian Peninsula in the eighth century. Jews and Christians both lived as dhimmis under Muslim rule, which allowed them to freely practice their religions while paying the jizyah tax and agreeing to live under Islamic laws. There was discrimination but it was not as widespread as in the rest of Europe. As the Crusades waged in the eleventh century, Christians began to rebel in the Iberian

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<sup>88</sup> Eli Barnawi ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 130-131; Joshua Levy, "Expulsion and Readmission," My Jewish Learning, accessed April 29, 2020, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/expulsion-and-readmission/>.

<sup>89</sup> Eli Barnawi ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 130-131; Joshua Levy, "Expulsion and Readmission," My Jewish Learning, accessed October 3, 2019, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/expulsion-and-readmission/>.

Peninsula against their Muslim rulers. As the twelfth century began, smaller Christian kingdoms began to arise on the peninsula.<sup>90</sup>

As Christianity took control of the peninsula, Christian antisemitism grew as well. The blood libel again resurfaced as monks from the Dominican and Franciscan religious orders told tales of Jews committing religious sacrifices. As the Black Plague spread through Europe, suspicions of Jews poisoning wells also spread through the peninsula.<sup>91</sup> By 1248, Christianity had successfully overthrown Spain's Muslim rulers. Eventually, multiple Christian kingdoms on the Iberian Peninsula would unite through a series of marriages and treaties to form what is today Spain.<sup>92</sup>

Spain began a campaign in the late fourteenth century to convert Jews to Catholicism under the threat of death. In 1390, a Franciscan priest in Castile named Ferrand Martinez ordered priests under his authority to destroy all synagogues in their area. Martinez had for years called for the expulsion of Jews. Hundreds of Jews were murdered in Seville in June 1391 by Martinez and his followers, who also incited mobs that spread to Cordoba and Toledo.<sup>93</sup> The riots spread throughout Spain. Some 100,000 Jews converted during this time, known as the Great Conversion of 1391, while an estimated 100,000 more were murdered—representing approximately one-third of Spain's Jewish population. Another 100,000 Jews fled for the safety of Muslim-ruled lands.<sup>94</sup> This was a precursor to the Spanish Inquisition of the next century.

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<sup>90</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2012), 102-109.

<sup>91</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2012), 102-109.

<sup>92</sup> "Medieval Jewish History, 632 to 1650," My Jewish Learning, accessed September 24, 2019, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/medieval-jewish-history-632-to-1650/>; Renee Levine Melammed, "Converting Before the Great Conversion," *Jerusalem Post*, February 28, 2013, <https://www.jpost.com/Jewish-World/Judaism/Converting-before-the-Great-Conversion>.

<sup>93</sup> Richard Gottheil and Meyer Kayserling, "Martinez, Ferrand," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1906, <http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10442-martinez-ferrand>.

<sup>94</sup> "Medieval Jewish History, 632 to 1650," My Jewish Learning, accessed September 24, 2019, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/medieval-jewish-history-632-to-1650/>; Joshua Levy, "Expulsion and Readmission," My Jewish Learning, accessed September 24, 2019, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/expulsion-and-readmission/>.

The roots of the Spanish Inquisition—a period that officially lasted for several hundred years but is most associated with the fifteenth century—are traceable back to the twelfth century. In 1184, Pope Lucius III issued a decree for bishops to actively identify and prosecute heresy in an effort to eliminate it from their domains.<sup>95</sup> As Spain emerged from Muslim rule and Catholic monarchs seized power, the inquisition took on new dimensions. By 1415, an additional 50,000 Jews converted to Catholicism. These Jews who converted became known by the Spanish term *conversos*, “converted ones.” Nonetheless, the mobs failed to eradicate Judaism from Spain. A subset of conversos known as crypto-Jews continued to practice Judaism in secret. The Spanish referred to these crypto-Jews as *marranos*, swine. And still other Jews in Spain remained committed to their faith, untouched by the mobs that had devastated other Jewish communities.<sup>96</sup>

Defining Judaism and Jews has been a complicated subject throughout history, and the debate over who is a Jew and what Judaism means played a large role during the early fourteenth century. Jews themselves have assumed the mantles of a nation, a religion, and an ethnicity, sometimes separately but typically all at the same time. Rabbis and Jewish leaders have debated the monikers and reached different conclusions throughout Jewish history, but largely agreed that Jews are both a religion and a nation, *Am Yisrael*, “the people of Israel.”

For Spanish conversos, the question of Jewish peoplehood versus Jewish faith became a debate for their persecutors. Life for the conversos in Spain improved somewhat as they found themselves with access to professions from which they had previously been blocked. But they also elicited mistrust from Christians. Conversos were no longer

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<sup>95</sup> “A Brief History of the Inquisition,” University of Notre Dame Hesburgh Libraries, accessed September 23, 2019, [https://inquisition.library.nd.edu/brief\\_history.RBSC-INQ:COLLECTION](https://inquisition.library.nd.edu/brief_history.RBSC-INQ:COLLECTION).

<sup>96</sup> Joshua Teplitsky, “Crypto-Jews,” My Jewish Learning, accessed September 24, 2019, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/crypto-jews/>.

captive to the legal restrictions imposed on Jews, but not all Christians trusted them. Some argued that though they had given up Jewish practice, the conversos maintained Jewish blood and remained impure. In Toledo, officials began segregating conversos through the implementation of blood-purity laws. These laws then spread throughout Spain. Violence against conversos also increased as several religious leaders feared conversos would revert to Judaism. They also accused both Jews and conversos of trying to lead astray God-fearing Christians. These charges also led to renewed accusations of the blood libel and devil worship.<sup>97</sup>

Spain's rulers, King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella, sought to quell these rumors of conversos proselytizing Christians. Their answer was the creation of the Spanish Inquisition in 1490. Pope Sixtus IV initially authorized the creation of inquisitions on November 1, 1478, through a papal bull, *Exigit Sincerae Devotionis Affectus*, "Requires Sincere Devotion."<sup>98</sup> The Spanish Inquisition sought to eradicate all signs of Judaism and brought scrutiny upon conversos' church attendance and even dietary habits. For example, an aversion to pork, forbidden under Jewish dietary law, was considered a sign of reversion to Judaism.

On March 31, 1492, Ferdinand issued a decree ordering all "Jews and Jewesses" to leave Spain never to return, as their presence "resulted in great damage and detriment of our holy Catholic faith."<sup>99</sup> Some 300,000 people left, ending 1,500 years of Jewish life in Spain, according to the recollection of Isaac Abravanel, a Jewish adviser to

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<sup>97</sup> Joshua Teplitsky, "Crypto-Jews," My Jewish Learning, accessed September 24, 2019, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/crypto-jews/>; Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2012), 106-107.

<sup>98</sup> Sophie Arie, "Historians say Inquisition wasn't that bad," *Guardian* (London), June 15, 2004, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/jun/16/artsandhumanities.internationaleducationnews>; "Sixtus IV," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed September 24, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sixtus-IV>; "Spanish Inquisition," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed September 24, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Spanish-Inquisition>.

<sup>99</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2012), 107.



Ferdinand and Isabella who had helped arrange financing for Christopher Columbus's expedition that year. Abravanel himself fled to Naples.<sup>100</sup>

Historians estimate that the actual number of Jews expelled from Spain was between 40,000 and 100,000, while Abravanel estimated 300,000. Jews who left Spain traveled to Italy, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. These Jews became known as the *Sephardim*, *Sephard* being the Hebrew word for Spain. They became one of two main cultural branches of Judaism, the other being the *Ashkenazim*, Jews who historically descended from Central and Eastern Europe. In 2015, the Spanish parliament invited descendants of Sephardi Jews who could trace their lineage back to Spain to claim citizenship. As of September 2019, only 5,937 applications had been approved.<sup>101</sup>

Some 125,000 people were tried during the Inquisition. Historians estimate that between 30,000 and 300,000 people were killed. According to Vatican archival information, only approximately 1,250 people were executed as heretics by the Inquisition.<sup>102</sup> An estimated 2,000 people were burned at the stake under the guidance of Spain's grand inquisitor, Tomás de Torquemada.<sup>103</sup>

The Inquisition officially continued in Spain and elsewhere in Europe through the nineteenth century. Jews are largely remembered as the main victims of the Spanish Inquisition, but it was actually one of several inquisitions that started in the thirteenth century and targeted anyone deemed heretical to the Catholic Church. Victims included Protestants, Muslims, and others. Pope Paul III created the Congregation of the

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<sup>100</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2012), 108.

<sup>101</sup> Kiku Adatto, "Spain's Attempt to Aton for a 500-Year-Old Sin," *Atlantic*, September 21, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/09/spain-offers-citizenship-sephardic-jews/598258/>; Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 2012), 108; Rachel M. Solomin, "Who are Sephardic Jews?" My Jewish Learning, accessed September 24, 2019, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/who-are-sephardic-jews/>.

<sup>102</sup> Sophie Arie, "Historians say Inquisition wasn't that bad," *Guardian* (London), June 15, 2004, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/jun/16/artsandhumanities.internationaleducationnews>.

<sup>103</sup> "Spanish Inquisition," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed September 24, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Spanish-Inquisition>.

Inquisition in 1542, which operated until 1908 when Pope Pius X renamed it as the Congregation of the Holy Office.<sup>104</sup>

## Sixteenth Century through Eighteenth Century: Ghettos, the Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the Talmud on Trial Again

Many of Europe's oldest cities contain distinctive Jewish quarters, enclaves where Jews historically congregated and lived together. One of the oldest of the Jewish quarters can be found in Alexandria, Egypt, created during Roman rule. Many of these historic Jewish quarters developed because of communal needs—the need for a quorum of 10 Jewish men for prayer services, religious travel restrictions on the Sabbath, and the desire to live close to synagogues and Jewish schools. Jews chose to live within geographic proximity of each other to better maintain their participation in the larger Jewish community.

Not all Jewish quarters were established by choice, however. The sixteenth century introduced a new concept to the world that would affect Jewish life for the next 400 years: The ghetto. The Venetian Ghetto is both one of the most famous ghettos that remains in existence and one of the oldest. Germany, in 1462, instituted the Frankfurt ghetto, *Frankfurter Judengasse* (“Jews’ Lane”), a walled-off street where Jews were forced to reside. The Juddengasse remained in operation through 1811.<sup>105</sup> Although the Juddengasse predated the Venetian Ghetto, it would be the Venetian Ghetto that introduced the concept to the Western cultural lexicon.

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<sup>104</sup> Cullen Murphy, “The Top 10 Questions Everyone Has About the Inquisition,” Huffington Post, last updated March 24, 2012, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/10-questions-about-the-inquisition\\_b\\_1224406](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/10-questions-about-the-inquisition_b_1224406); “A Brief History of the Inquisition,” University of Notre Dame Hesburgh Libraries, accessed September 23, 2019, [https://inquisition.library.nd.edu/brief\\_history.RBSC-INQ:COLLECTION](https://inquisition.library.nd.edu/brief_history.RBSC-INQ:COLLECTION).

<sup>105</sup> Jewish Sights in Frankfurt am Main, accessed October 2, 2019, <http://en.juedisches-frankfurt.de/>; “Frankfurt-Am-Main,” Beit Hatfutsot – The Museum of the Jewish People, accessed September 20, 2019, <https://dbs.bh.org.il/place/frankfurt-am-main>.

Prior to the fourteenth century, Jews were allowed to travel to Venice for business but were not permitted to live within the city. This changed in 1385 because of a need for Jewish money-lending services during a war with the neighboring city of Chioggia.<sup>106</sup> On March 29, 1516, Doge Leonardo Loredan (the title “doge” is the equivalent of duke) of Venice decreed that the city’s Jews would be separated and confined to a single area of the city. The term “ghetto” originated in the Venetian dialect as a derivation of the word “*geto*,” meaning foundry, as the area Loredan designated was close to a foundry.<sup>107</sup> Within the ghetto, Jews were limited to only a handful of professions, such as selling clothing or practicing medicine. And, of course, moneylending.<sup>108</sup>

Loredan’s solution to Jewish residency began to spread in 1555 after Pope Paul IV decreed that Jews should wear distinctive clothing and reside within ghettos; their property was confiscated and sold to Christians.<sup>109</sup> Jews were permitted to leave the ghetto during the day but had to return by sunset when the gates were locked. Jews who thought they might escape at night were prevented by Christian guards stationed at the gates, for which the Jewish residents were also required to pay.<sup>110</sup>

By 1650, approximately 4,000 people resided within the confines of the Venetian Ghetto. Napoleon Bonaparte eventually dismantled the ghetto in 1797 after conquering Venice during his march across Europe.<sup>111</sup> In Rome, however, the ghetto remained in

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<sup>106</sup> “Jewish Venice,” Beit Hatfutsot – The Museum of the Jewish People, accessed September 20, 2019, <https://www.jewishvenice.org/history-culture/>.

<sup>107</sup> David Laskin, “500 Years of Jewish Life in Venice,” *New York Times*, March 9, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/13/travel/venice-italy-jewish-ghetto.html>.

<sup>108</sup> “Jewish Venice,” Beit Hatfutsot – The Museum of the Jewish People, accessed September 20, 2019, <https://www.jewishvenice.org/history-culture/>.

<sup>109</sup> “Rome,” Beit Hatfutsot – The Museum of the Jewish People, accessed September 20, 2019, <https://dbs.bh.org.il/place/rome>.

<sup>110</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012), 129.

<sup>111</sup> “Jewish Venice,” Beit Hatfutsot – The Museum of the Jewish People, accessed September 20, 2019, <https://www.jewishvenice.org/history-culture/>; David Laskin, “500 Years of Jewish Life in Venice,” *New York Times*, March 9, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/13/travel/venice-italy-jewish-ghetto.html>; William Nicholls, *Christian Anti-Semitism: A History of Hate* (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1993), 302.

use until Pope Pius IX ordered its gates torn down in 1846.<sup>112</sup> Though they were no longer restricted there, Jews continued to reside in the Venetian Ghetto. Some 1,300 Jews remained in the ghetto by the beginning of World War II, but only seven returned to the ghetto after the war.<sup>113</sup>

As Italy was creating a new paradigm for its Jews, Germany was also undergoing changes that would profoundly affect Christianity as well as form the basis for future accusations against Jews. In 1517, German theology professor Martin Luther posted his famous 95 theses to the door of his church in Wittenberg, Germany. Luther took issue with Pope Leo X selling indulgences—the cancelation of penance for sins—in order to raise money for renovations of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. Luther’s proclamations argued against the practice and began Europe’s Protestant Reformation.<sup>114</sup>

Luther’s earlier writings were devoid of antisemitic overtones, but later in his life that changed dramatically. Luther once wrote that Jews might be swayed toward accepting Jesus if they were shown more compassion. He argued in his 1523 essay *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew* that Jews should be allowed to live among Christians and called for the lifting of restrictions on Jews in order to convince them to convert.<sup>115</sup> Later in life, Luther denounced Jews and urged their persecution. In 1543, Luther penned *On the Jews & Their Lies*, in which he claimed the Jews “so poisonously slander” Christianity.<sup>116</sup> Luther classified the Jews as a “damned, rejected race” and suggested that their homes and houses of worship should be destroyed, rabbis should be

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<sup>112</sup> “Rome,” Beit Hatfutsot – The Museum of the Jewish People, accessed September 20, 2019, <https://dbs.bh.org.il/place/rome>.

<sup>113</sup> “Jewish Venice,” Beit Hatfutsot – The Museum of the Jewish People, accessed September 20, 2019, <https://www.jewishvenice.org/history-culture/>.

<sup>114</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012), 116-127; Martin Luther, “Disputation on the Power of Indulgences (The Ninety-Five Theses)” in *The Essential Luther*, ed. Tryntje Helfferich (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 2018), 8-20.

<sup>115</sup> Martin Luther, “That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew” in *The Essential Luther*, ed. Tryntje Helfferich (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 2018), 144-151.

<sup>116</sup> Martin Luther, “On the Jews & Their Lies” in *The Essential Luther*, ed. Tryntje Helfferich (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 2018), 286.

forbidden from teaching under the threat of death, Jews should be forbidden from travel, all Jewish money and valuables should be confiscated, and young Jews should be placed into forced labor.<sup>117</sup>

Luther's antisemitism was firmly rooted in the historical antisemitic tropes of Christianity. Luther attacked the concept of the Jews being God's chosen people, which he described as boastful and undeserved (e.g., "They praise and thank God that He made them a special people ...being full with arrogance, envy, usury, avarice, and every kind of wickedness." <sup>118</sup>).

Luther also attacked the Jews for rejecting Jesus as the messiah (e.g., "We want to demonstrate that we believe properly and that they completely err in this point about the Messiah."<sup>119</sup>). Luther further condemned the Jewish belief that the messiah will still come, accusing the Jews of holding so firmly to the idea that "if God Himself spoke publicly" that the messiah "had come long ago," the Jews would "see God Himself as the devil...."<sup>120</sup> Throughout the book Luther drew on biblical verse to demonstrate God's rejection of the Jewish people and why good Christians should thus reject the Jews as well. Luther accused the Jews of being "thoroughly rebuked [by God] as a disobedient, evil people and the worst whore...."<sup>121</sup>

Almost 500 years after Luther's death, his writing endures as a mainstay for those who seek a basis within Christianity to prove the Jews are the "bloodthirsty and vindictive

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<sup>117</sup> Martin Luther, "On the Jews & Their Lies" in *The Essential Luther*, ed. Tryntje Helfferich (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 2018), 284-303.

<sup>118</sup> Martin Luther, "On the Jews & Their Lies" in *The Essential Luther*, ed. Tryntje Helfferich (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 2018), 294.

<sup>119</sup> Martin Luther, "On the Jews & Their Lies" in *The Essential Luther*, ed. Tryntje Helfferich (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 2018), 286.

<sup>120</sup> Martin Luther, "On the Jews & Their Lies" in *The Essential Luther*, ed. Tryntje Helfferich (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 2018), 295.

<sup>121</sup> Martin Luther, "On the Jews & Their Lies" in *The Essential Luther*, ed. Tryntje Helfferich (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 2018), 294.

people” that Luther described.<sup>122</sup> The Nazis used Luther’s writings as support for their own positions with Protestant clergy.<sup>123</sup> In November 1933, for example, the Nazis held “German Luther Day,” celebrating the sixteenth-century writer. Conspiracy theorists such as Paul Boggs have also referenced the work. In 2017, Boggs published *On The Jews And Their Lies: 9/11*, a reprinting of Luther’s work that he used to advance his conspiracy theories that Jews were responsible for both World War II and the September 11, 2001, attacks.<sup>124</sup> *On the Jews and Their Lies* remains one of the most enduring antisemitic screeds in history, similar in impact to the famed Russian forgery *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*.

Luther plumbed Christian biblical texts to support his conclusions about the Jews. A little over 100 years after Luther’s death, another German scholar decided that to fully understand the Jews and their duplicity one must immerse himself in Jewish texts. Beginning in 1680 at the age of 24, German scholar Johann Andreas Eisenmenger began a 17-year deception posing as a Jew. He attended *yeshivas* (Jewish religious schools) and studied under well-known rabbis, including the chief Ashkenazi rabbi of Amsterdam, David ben Aryeh Lieb of Lithuania.<sup>125</sup>

In 1700, Eisenmenger published *Entdecktes Judenthum* (“Judaism Unmasked”), which fueled new suspicions and conspiracies about the Talmud and its contents. Eisenmenger declared Germans to be a distinct subset of Christianity and, using Talmudic sources, argued that the Jews reviled gentiles and Christians in particular. He

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<sup>122</sup> Martin Luther, “On the Jews & Their Lies” in *The Essential Luther*, ed. Tryntje Helfferich (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 2018), 291.

<sup>123</sup> Christopher J. Probst, “Demonizing the Jews: Luther and the Protestant Church in Nazi Germany,” U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed August 23, 2019, <https://www.ushmm.org/research/publications/academic-publications/full-list-of-academic-publications/demonizing-the-jews-luther-and-the-protestant-church-in-nazi-germany>.

<sup>124</sup> Paul Boggs, *On The Jews And Their Lies: 9/11* (Christchurch: Silvanus Publishing Incorporated, 2017).

<sup>125</sup> Henry Abramson, “He posed as a righteous Jewish convert for 19 years. Then he wrote a 2,000-page anti-Semitic screed,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 6, 2019, <https://www.jta.org/2019/08/06/opinion/he-posed-as-a-righteous-jewish-convert-for-19-years-then-he-wrote-a-2000-page-anti-semitic-screed>.

further built the specter of the Jewish threat by quoting from an unidentified Jewish text calling for the destruction of all heathens and portraying Jews as religiously devoted to the act of murdering gentiles. “Because this rule must still be observed by them to this day,” he wrote, “those [Jews] who live under us follow it without question. It pertains to all Christians, and so they [the Jews] are not allowed to save any of them [the Germans] from death.”<sup>126</sup>

To combat this threat to Germans, Eisenmenger called for an end to Jewish “freedom” in trade because it was giving them dominance over Germans. He also demanded an immediate ban on synagogues, Jewish public worship, and communal leaders and rabbis.<sup>127</sup> In 1699, ahead of the book’s release, the local Jewish community petitioned Emperor Leopold I—then the Holy Roman emperor and king of Hungary, Croatia, and Bohemia—to stop its publication out of fear that it would cause a violent antisemitic backlash.<sup>128</sup> Despite the petition, Eisenmenger successfully published the book a few years later.

Eisenmenger died suddenly in 1704 from a stroke shortly after his book’s publication. The book, however, remains a source of academic insight into early German antisemitism. According to the late Penn State University Jewish Studies scholar Paul Lawrence Rose, Eisenmenger amassed “quotations from the Talmud and other Hebrew sources revealing to all how the Jewish religion was barbarous, superstitious, and even murderous.” But, Rose noted in his book *Revolutionary Antisemitism in Germany: From Kant to Wagner*, Eisenmenger’s scholarship “belied the author’s evident preoccupation (like Luther) with tales of Jewish ritual murder of Christian children and poisoning of

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<sup>126</sup> Pierre James, *The Murderous Paradise: German Nationalism and the Holocaust* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group Inc., 2001) 72-73.

<sup>127</sup> Paul Lawrence Rose, *Revolutionary Antisemitism in Germany: From Kant to Wagner* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 8f.

<sup>128</sup> Henry Abramson, “He posed as a righteous Jewish convert for 19 years. Then he wrote a 2,000-page anti-Semitic screed,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 6, 2019, <https://www.jta.org/2019/08/06/opinion/he-posed-as-a-righteous-jewish-convert-for-19-years-then-he-wrote-a-2000-page-anti-semitic-screed>.



wells.”<sup>129</sup> According to historian Henry Abramson of Touro College, “Eisenmenger strove for accuracy in citation and translation, but criminally distorted the meaning of the passages in context with unacceptably tendentious commentary to promote awful lies like the infamous blood libel....”<sup>130</sup>

Its academic inaccuracy notwithstanding, *Entdecktes Judenthum* became a primary source for other antisemitic scholars seeking support for their theories and conspiracies regarding Jewish practice and the Talmud that exist to this day. In the nineteenth century, conspiracy theories about Jews—from Jewish power and world domination to blood rituals and devil worship—were further cemented with the publication of the Russian forgery *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. This 1905 publication claimed to be a reproduction of marching orders to a global Jewish cabal that sought control of the press, finances, and governments using the so-called protocols contained within the book.

## Late Eighteenth Century Through Early Twentieth Century: A Jewish Family Conspiracy, Jewish Emancipation, the Blood Libel Emerges in the Middle East, the Dreyfus Affair, and the Rise of Zionism

After centuries of imposing restrictions on Jews, European nations slowly began to grant Jews expanded rights in the late eighteenth century. This period is known as Jewish Emancipation, the roots of which began in France during its revolution and spread through Western Europe over the course of the next two centuries. But while the

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<sup>129</sup> Paul Lawrence Rose, *Revolutionary Antisemitism in Germany: From Kant to Wagner* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 8f.

<sup>130</sup> Henry Abramson, “He posed as a righteous Jewish convert for 19 years. Then he wrote a 2,000-page anti-Semitic screed,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 6, 2019, <https://www.jta.org/2019/08/06/opinion/he-posed-as-a-righteous-jewish-convert-for-19-years-then-he-wrote-a-2000-page-anti-semitic-screed>.

nineteenth century brought new freedoms for Europe's Jews, it also birthed some of the most well-known anti-Jewish conspiracies. As Jews were granted citizenship, the questions of Jewish loyalty and nationality became more pronounced. Were Jews a religion or also a nation? And if they were a nation, would they be more loyal to the Jewish nation than to the nation-state in which they resided? The Jewish question dominated French political debates at both the beginning and at the end of the nineteenth century.

In 1789, at the beginning of the French Revolution, the National Assembly of France passed the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. In line with the spirit of the revolution, the document declared the equality of men and laid the foundation for French democracy by outlining citizens' civil rights, including the derivation of sovereignty from the nation itself, rather than from a monarch. Of particular interest to French Jews was the tenth article: "No one shall be disquieted on account of his opinions, including his religious views, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law."<sup>131</sup> In December 1789, French nobleman Stanislas Marie Adélaïde argued before the National Assembly that Article X should include Jews. He declared: "The Jews should be denied everything as a nation, but granted everything as individuals."<sup>132</sup> France's Constituent Assembly passed the declaration in 1791.<sup>133</sup>

Napoleon Bonaparte resisted calls to expel his Jewish population in favor of a strategy to try to change their behavior. Bonaparte came to believe that to "chase away the Jews" would be "a sign of weakness," while "it would be a sign of strength to correct them."<sup>134</sup> In 1806, Bonaparte received a petition from the citizens of Alsace-Lorraine,

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<sup>131</sup> "Declaration of the Rights of Man – 1789," Avalon Project, Yale Law School, accessed September 19, 2019, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/rightsof.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp).

<sup>132</sup> Eli Barnavi, "Jewish Emancipation in Western Europe," My Jewish Learning, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-emancipation-in-western-europe/>.

<sup>133</sup> Eli Barnavi, "Jewish Emancipation in Western Europe," My Jewish Learning, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-emancipation-in-western-europe/>.

<sup>134</sup> William Nicholls, *Christian Anti-Semitism: A History of Hate* (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1993), 302.

who found themselves unable to pay their debts to Jewish money-lenders. The pleas swayed Bonaparte to action, and he implemented a strategy to “correct” the Jews rather than expel them. France’s National Assembly passed a one-year moratorium on debts to Jewish lenders. Bonaparte convened a commission of well-to-do Jews and presented them with a series of questions regarding Jewish practice related to civil marriages, divorce, mixed marriages, usury, and whether French Jews would die to defend France—all with the intent of the commission endorsing the authority of the French state. In essence, Bonaparte was demanding loyalty—to France, French society, and French laws. Jews had long been accused of loyalty to the larger Jewish community over the states in which they lived, and Bonaparte sought to ensure Jewish loyalty to the state by offering Jews freedoms they had up to then been denied.

The commission agreed to abide by all of Bonaparte’s terms, but it lacked a central religious authority that would resonate with the French Jewish community.<sup>135</sup> To gain this authority, Bonaparte convened a *Sanhedrin*, an assembly of notable French rabbis based on the assembly of learned rabbis in biblical Israel, which would debate and rule on questions of law. Bonaparte wished for the Sanhedrin to incorporate his demands into Jewish law in order for the Jews of France to view themselves as French citizens first and foremost. The French Sanhedrin met in 1807 and largely agreed to Bonaparte’s demands. The exception was the issue of mixed marriages, on which the Sanhedrin compromised and said that while Jewish law would not officially sanction them, it would recognize mixed marriages performed in civil ceremonies.<sup>136</sup> As a result of this bargain with Bonaparte, France’s Jews became integrated French citizens in return for ceding some religious authority to the state. However, Bonaparte would later retract his promises and institute new limitations on Jewish life.

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<sup>135</sup> William Nicholls, *Christian Anti-Semitism: A History of Hate* (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1993), 301-305.

<sup>136</sup> William Nicholls, *Christian Anti-Semitism: A History of Hate* (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1993), 301-305.

Bonaparte's exile to Elba in 1814 and defeat at Waterloo the following year resulted in the reimposition of restrictions on Jews. In 1814, the Congress of Vienna convened to discuss a new German Federation comprised of 36 Germanic states. The Congress also took up the issue of the Jewish Emancipation that was taking hold in Europe and how Jews would fare in the new German Federation. Several of the Germanic states had begun to grant their Jewish citizens expanded rights. The final wording of the constitution provided for Jews to retain these rights granted "by" several of the federated states, but the word "by" was purposefully inserted in place of the word "in" to make the scope of where these rights were valid more ambiguous.<sup>137</sup>

Prussia began to sell limited residential rights to Jews in the late seventeenth century—in exchange for large sums of money. Jews came to Berlin in 1669 when King Frederick I of Prussia allowed them to seek refuge after expulsion from Vienna. These refugees, however, were allowed to settle in Berlin only if they paid the requisite amount—2,000 thaler per person, or approximately \$90,000 in today's dollars. In 1710, the son of Frederick I, King Frederick William, allowed Jews in Berlin to remove the yellow patches from their clothing in exchange for a large sum of money. Frederick II went further and encouraged Jews to develop industry in Berlin. According to historian Phyllis Goldstein, Jews created 37 of the 46 new businesses in Prussia during Frederick II's rule. Goldstein explained in her book *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* that Jews who could afford to buy these privileges or had a privileged relationship with the king became known as the "court Jews." Rights were also granted to the wives and children of court Jews, but those rights were revoked in the case of death of the court

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<sup>137</sup> William Nicholls, *Christian Anti-Semitism: A History of Hate* (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1993), 305-307.

Jew.<sup>138</sup> Frederick II himself died in 1786.<sup>139</sup> Prussia finally granted citizenship to its Jews in 1812.<sup>140</sup>

Across Europe, Jews began to gain access to professions from which they had previously been blocked. Centuries of Jewish exclusion from other occupations and the prominence of Jews in a field frowned upon by Christian theology fueled the beliefs that Jews were unscrupulous and gave rise to stereotypes of Jewish greed, shrewdness, and financial acumen.<sup>141</sup> Historian Howard M. Sachar estimated that in the eighteenth century, “perhaps as many as three-fourths of the Jews in Central and Western Europe were limited to the precarious occupations of retail peddling, hawking, and ‘street banking,’ that is, moneylending.”<sup>142</sup>

With the onset of the Emancipation, Jewish financiers also found new, wealthier, and politically prominent clients available to them, which resulted in the emergence of wealthy Jewish families such as the Rothschilds.

In the mid- to late-eighteenth century, Mayer Amschel Rothschild began to build a family business that would create one of Europe’s wealthiest dynasties and would also launch an enduring conspiracy theory of Jewish money and power. Born in the Frankfurt Judengasse, Rothschild built an empire trading in rare coins and currencies that eventually included providing financial services to Crown Prince Wilhelm of Hesse and the British Empire. By Rothschild’s death in September 1812, the business had expanded in Frankfurt and in England. His four sons had also joined the business,

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<sup>138</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012), 162-163.

<sup>139</sup> Matthew Smith Anderson, “Frederick II,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, last updated August 13, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Frederick-II-king-of-Prussia>.

<sup>140</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012), 165.

<sup>141</sup> Brigitte Sion, “Conspiracy Theories and the Jews,” My Jewish Learning, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/conspiracy-theories-the-jews/>.

<sup>142</sup> Howard M. Sachar, “A History of the Jews in the Modern World,” *New York Times*, September 4, 2005, <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/04/books/chapters/a-history-of-the-jews-in-the-modern-world.html>.

renamed M.A. Rothschild und Söhne.<sup>143</sup> Today, the company owns properties in eight countries.<sup>144</sup>

The Rothschild family's great wealth and Mayer Rothschild's royal and government business connections spawned conspiracy theories that the powerful family exercised control over world events and financial systems.<sup>145</sup> Those conspiracy theories, which still exist today, can be traced back to the nineteenth century. In 1846, a political pamphlet signed by "Satan" explained that Nathan Rothschild, one of Mayer's sons, had been present at the 1815 Battle of Waterloo and witnessed Napoleon's defeat. According to the pamphlet, Rothschild then rode furiously to the coast and, encouraged by Satan, paid a local fisherman for his boat because Rothschild's ships were trapped by a storm over the English Channel. Rothschild returned to England before news of Waterloo spread there and made a fortune in the stock market exploiting his foreknowledge.<sup>146</sup>

Versions of the pamphlet spread across Europe. It was later revealed that "Satan" was in fact left-wing conspiracy theorist and known antisemite Georges Dairnvaell. Rothschild had not been present at Waterloo, nor had he made any great fortune in the stock market at that time. Even the storm over the English Channel had been fabricated.<sup>147</sup> Nonetheless, these facts failed to expunge the conspiracy theory from

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<sup>143</sup> "Mayer Amschel Rothschild (1744-1812)," The Rothschild Archive, accessed October 2, 2019, <https://family.rothschildarchive.org/people/21-mayer-amschel-rothschild-1744-1812>.

<sup>144</sup> "Rothschild Family Estates by Country," The Rothschild Archive, accessed October 2, 2019, <https://family.rothschildarchive.org/estates>.

<sup>145</sup> Michael S. Rosenwald, "The Rothschilds, a pamphlet by 'Satan' and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories tied to a battle 200 years ago," *Washington Post*, April 20, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2018/03/19/the-rothschilds-a-pamphlet-by-satan-and-conspiracy-theories-tied-to-a-battle-200-years-ago/>.

<sup>146</sup> Brian Cathcart, "The Rothschild Libel: Why has it taken 200 years for an anti-Semitic slur that emerged from the Battle of Waterloo to be dismissed?," *Independent* (London), May 3, 2015, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/the-rothschild-libel-why-has-it-taken-200-years-for-an-anti-semitic-slur-that-emerged-from-the-10216101.html>.

<sup>147</sup> Brian Cathcart, "The Rothschild Libel: Why has it taken 200 years for an anti-Semitic slur that emerged from the Battle of Waterloo to be dismissed?," *Independent* (London), May 3, 2015, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/the-rothschild-libel-why-has-it-taken-200-years-for-an-anti-semitic-slur-that-emerged-from-the-10216101.html>.

history. And today, the Rothschild dynasty is a favorite target of conspiracy theorists on both the far left and the far right, who claim everything from the Rothschilds controlling operations of the World Bank to the family's responsibility for the onset of hurricanes.

As the Rothschild conspiracy theory began to spread throughout Europe, another ancient antisemitic canard was taking hold in the Middle East: the blood libel, the accusation that Jews used the blood of gentiles for ritual purposes.

The Ottoman Empire had largely ignored blood libel accusations against Jews, which became increasingly common in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>148</sup> However, two cases of the blood libel emerged in the Ottoman Empire in February 1840, one on the island of Rhodes and the other in Syria. In Rhodes, a Greek Orthodox boy disappeared that month and the Greek community blamed the Jews for his disappearance. The Ottoman governor of Rhodes publicly sided against the Jewish community. An investigation in July 1840 cleared the Jewish community of responsibility, but only after months of protests and outreach by the Rhodes Jewish community to their compatriots in Constantinople and other European capitals.<sup>149</sup>

At the same time, in Ottoman-ruled Syria, Jews and Christians lived under the dhimmi status under the rule of Muhammad Ali, the Ottoman governor of Egypt who had united the two countries. The population of 100,000 in Damascus at the time included about 5,000 Jews and 12,000 Christians. That February, Catholic monk and French citizen Father Thomas and his Greek servant, Ibrahim Amarah, disappeared, allegedly after the pair had set off for the city's Jewish quarter. Suspicion immediately fell upon Syria's Jews. Crowds in Damascus protested that the Jews were responsible, while news articles in Paris blamed the Jews for murdering Thomas and Amarah and using their

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<sup>148</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012), 188.

<sup>149</sup> Yitzchak Kerem, "The 1840 Blood Libel in Rhodes," *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* (1997): 137-46, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23535855>.



blood in Passover rituals. The French consul in Syria seemingly embraced this narrative as well, further legitimizing the libel.<sup>150</sup>

Ottoman authorities arrested a Jewish barber named Solomon Halek and tortured him until he confessed to the murder. According to the confession, a rabbi and a group of Jews oversaw the monk's murder and collected his blood to serve during Passover. Seven of the city's wealthiest and most influential Jews were subsequently arrested as well and confessed under torture.<sup>151</sup>

While the blood libel was taking hold in the Middle East, Europe continued to struggle with the question of Jewish loyalty to the nation-state. Despite the French Sanhedrin's acquiescence to Bonaparte's demands, he continued to pass laws that separated and restricted Jews from French society. After Bonaparte's defeat at Waterloo, many Jews throughout Europe saw their new rights and freedoms granted during Emancipation rescinded and they returned to the ghettos.<sup>152</sup> Jews were once again separated and viewed as the societal Other across Europe. Questions about Jewish loyalty led to Jews being viewed as an enemy within the state subservient to the broader Jewish community. This line of thinking was most prominently on display in late nineteenth-century France during what came to be known as the Dreyfus Affair.

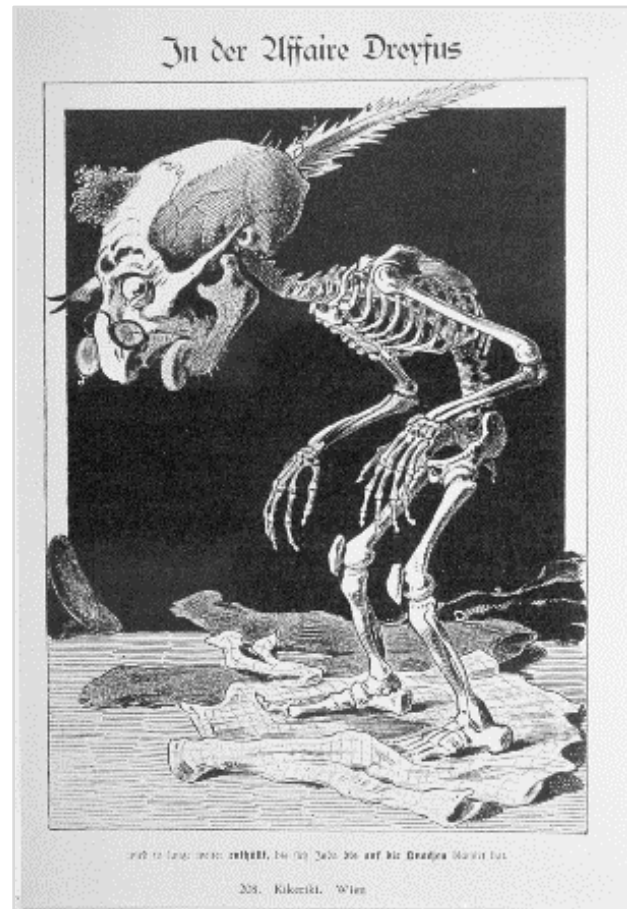
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<sup>150</sup> "The Damascus Blood Libel (1840) as Told by Syrian Defense Minister Mustafa Tlass," MEMRI, June 27, 2002, <https://www.memri.org/reports/damascus-blood-libel-1840-told-syrian-defense-minister-mustafa-tlass>; Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012), 183-204.

<sup>151</sup> "The Damascus Blood Libel (1840) as Told by Syrian Defense Minister Mustafa Tlass," MEMRI, June 27, 2002, <https://www.memri.org/reports/damascus-blood-libel-1840-told-syrian-defense-minister-mustafa-tlass>; Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012), 183-204.

<sup>152</sup> William Nicholls, *Christian Anti-Semitism: A History of Hate* (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1993), 304-305.

In December 1894, French authorities convicted Jewish army Captain Alfred Dreyfus of treason for passing secret documents to the Germans. Dreyfus was sentenced to life in prison and spent five years on Devil's Island in French Guiana. In 1896, new evidence arose identifying Ferdinand Walsin Esterhazy as the real perpetrator. Esterhazy was acquitted after a two-day trial and new charges were presented against Dreyfus based on forged documentation. On January 13, 1898, French novelist Émile Zola wrote an open letter entitled "J'accuse!" in the French newspaper *L'Aurore* naming those behind the conspiracy to frame Dreyfus. The accusation sparked riots across France and retaliation against Jews. Dreyfus returned to France in 1899 but was not acquitted until 1906.<sup>153</sup>



The Dreyfus Affair seemingly returned to the forefront Bonaparte's worries about Jewish loyalty. The European public was quick to accept the notion that a Jewish soldier had committed treason and that his loyalty was to the larger Jewish community rather than the country he served. On April 23, 1899, as the Dreyfus Affair gripped France, the cover of Viennese magazine *Kikeriki* featured a hunched-over skeleton with a face full of stereotypical Jewish features. The caption read: "In the Dreyfus Affair, the more that

<sup>153</sup> Piers Paul Read, "France is still fractured by the Dreyfus Affair," *Telegraph* (London), January 28, 2012, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/9045659/France-is-still-fractured-by-the-Dreyfus-Affair.html>.

is exposed, the more Judah is embarrassed.”<sup>154</sup> The image played upon multiple stereotypes of dishonesty, disloyalty, and the hook-nosed Jew.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Hungarian secular Jew Theodor Herzl was developing the concept of modern Zionism, the belief that Jews have a right to live as a free people in their historic homeland. Herzl witnessed the Dreyfus Affair firsthand as a journalist for a Viennese paper, which helped inform his beliefs that Jews could not receive justice in Europe. He wrote:

The Dreyfus case embodies more than a judicial error; it embodies the desire of the vast majority of the French to condemn a Jew, and to condemn all Jews in this one Jew. Death to the Jews! howled the mob, as the decorations were being ripped from the captain's coat.... Where? In France. In republican, modern, civilized France, a hundred years after the Declaration of the Rights of Man. The French people, or at any rate the greater part of the French people, does not want to extend the rights of man to Jews. The edict of the great Revolution had been revoked.<sup>155</sup>

Herzl proposed his solution in his 1896 book *Der Judenstaat*, “The Jewish State,” in which he called for the creation of a Jewish homeland, birthing the political Zionist movement that eventually led to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. Before reaching that milestone, however, the Jewish community of Europe would experience the most violent extended outbreak of state-institutionalized antisemitism in centuries, during the Holocaust in World War II.

The Jewish Emancipation came during a period when a new form of nationalism was spreading through Europe. As new countries emerged and sought to shape their

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<sup>154</sup> U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum archive, accessed September 11, 2019, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1041718>.

<sup>155</sup> Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat* (New York: Dover Publications, 1988), 34.

national identities, the Jewish question—and specifically the question of Jewish loyalty—resurfaced. In late nineteenth century Germany, academics and other elites embraced their new unified German identity and rallied under the banner of the “*völkisch* (people’s) movement.” The roots of the *völkisch* movement can be traced back to the early nineteenth century, when a group of German students burned books at Wartburg Castle out of a belief that they were anti-German. After Germany’s 1871 unification, the philosophy coalesced and began to attract prominent philosophers and thinkers. By the 1890s, it had become a movement that increasingly spotlighted racial differences in the social order. Jews were no longer identified as a religious group but as a distinctive racial entity within Germany—an entity that was increasingly responsible for the country’s problems.<sup>156</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, the movement was breeding a brand of racial antisemitism that would later dominate Germany under Nazism. It was during this time period that the term antisemitism itself first emerged. German writer Wilhelm Marr first used the term in an 1873 pamphlet entitled *Der Sieg des Judentums über das Germanentum* (“The Victory of Judaism Over Germandom”).<sup>157</sup>

A distinctive German antisemitism began to emerge, rooted in the fear of Jews gaining too much influence and power. The belief that Jews were orchestrating the Bolshevism emanating from Russia further ingrained fears of Jewish power.<sup>158</sup> One 1898 French cartoon, entitled “Rothschild,” depicted a large-nosed Jew wearing a crown with an idol of a calf in the center while embracing a globe with his demon hands.<sup>159</sup> An 1897

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<sup>156</sup> Jefferson Chase, “AfD co-chair Petry wants to rehabilitate controversial term,” Deutsche Welle, September 11, 2016, <https://www.dw.com/en/afd-co-chair-petry-wants-to-rehabilitate-controversial-term/a-19543222>; “AntiSemitism,” U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed November 28, 2018, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/antisemitism>; Guy Tourlamain, “Introduction” in *“Völkisch” Writers and National Socialism: A Study of Right-Wing Political Culture in Germany, 1890-1960* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2014), 1-22, 24-26, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv2t4f2g.5>.

<sup>157</sup> Eli Barnawi ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 186.

<sup>158</sup> Eli Barnawi ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 186.

<sup>159</sup> “Antisemitic political cartoon entitled ‘Rothschild’ by the French caricaturist, C. Leandre, 1898,” U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed October 4, 2019, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1041697>.

cartoon in the Viennese magazine *Kikeriki* depicted an exaggerated caricature of a Jewish merchant swindling an upstanding gentile citizen.<sup>160</sup>

Jewish assimilation rates in Germany were actually increasing during this time. Some 12,000 Jews converted to Protestantism between 1889 and 1910, while others embraced the secularism of the world around them.<sup>161</sup> Writers who supported the *völkisch* movement, however, wrote that Jewishness was racial and no amount of assimilation could override inherent tendencies toward thievery, usury, and other negative traits that formed the basis of Jewish stereotype. The ideas of the *völkisch* movement became more widespread in the early twentieth century and Adolf Hitler drew inspiration from it as he began his political ascension in the 1920s.<sup>162</sup>

## Nineteenth Century to Twentieth Century Russia: Pogroms, the Rise of Communism and Bolshevism, and the Forgery of the Elders of Zion

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, Jews in czarist Russia were largely forced to live in an area of western Russia referred to as the Pale of Settlement. The Pale included 15 provinces in northwestern and southwestern Russia, including modern day Belarus, Ukraine, and Lithuania. While Jews were legally able to settle throughout the

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<sup>160</sup> Eli Barnawi ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 186.

<sup>161</sup> Guy Tourlamain, "Introduction" in *"Völkisch" Writers and National Socialism: A Study of Right-Wing Political Culture in Germany, 1890-1960* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2014), 26, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv2t4f2g.5>.

<sup>162</sup> Jefferson Chase, "AfD co-chair Petry wants to rehabilitate controversial term," Deutsche Welle, September 11, 2016, <https://www.dw.com/en/afd-co-chair-petry-wants-to-rehabilitate-controversial-term/a-19543222>; "Anti-Semitism," U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed November 28, 2018, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/antisemitism>; Guy Tourlamain, "Introduction" in *"Völkisch" Writers and National Socialism: A Study of Right-Wing Political Culture in Germany, 1890-1960* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2014), 24-26, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv2t4f2g.5>.

Pale, residency outside of its borders was typically illegal. The Pale remained in effect until the Russian revolution in 1917.<sup>163</sup>

Russian antisemitism had historically relied on classic tropes rooted in Christianity. This included the blood libel, which sparked horrific violence that introduced the concept of the *pogrom* to the rest of the world. *Pogrom* is a Russian word that means to wreak havoc or violently destroy, by way of an organized massacre, particularly of Jews. The earliest recorded pogrom took place in 1821 in Odessa, where Jews and Greeks lived together. Greece was under Ottoman occupation and Greeks were seeking independence. The Ottomans executed the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople, Gregory V, and sparked riots. In Odessa, Greeks accused Jews of aiding in and celebrating Gregory's death.<sup>164</sup> Accusations of the blood libel continued to surface in the ensuing years and riots against Jews became more common. It was not until 1903, however, that the word pogrom would garner international attention and enter the global lexicon. On April 8 of that year, Easter Sunday, gangs armed with knives and axes killed 49 Jews and wounded hundreds more in the city of Kishinev.<sup>165</sup>

The czarist government viewed pogroms as a reaction against anti-czarist forces, so authorities largely looked the other way. Historians are at odds over whether the Russian state provided support to the attackers. Pogroms presented authorities with an opportunity to demonstrate their own usefulness by allowing rioters to destroy Jewish property and then ending the action in a show of state power. The pogroms also shifted the public's focus away from the government's own repression and onto a scapegoat:

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<sup>163</sup> "Modern Jewish History: The Pale of Settlement," Jewish Virtual Library, accessed September 11, 2019, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-pale-of-settlement>; "March 28, 1871, Odessa," Center for Online Jewish Studies, accessed September 26, 2019, <http://cojs.org/march-28-1871-odessa/>.

<sup>164</sup> "Pogroms," U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed November 28, 2018, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/pogroms>; "Pogrom," Merriam-Webster, accessed September 27, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pogrom>.

<sup>165</sup> Corydon Ireland, "The pogrom that transformed 20th century Jewry," *Harvard Gazette*, April 9, 2009, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2009/04/the-pogrom-that-transformed-20th-century-jewry/>; Eli Barnawi ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 191.



Jews. Nonetheless, researchers have found little to no direct evidence that the Russian government supported the pogroms.<sup>166</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century, Russian antisemitism began to focus on the economic impact of Jews, casting them as representatives of an increasingly oppressive capitalist system during the time socialism began to take hold in Russia. As in Europe, Jews were treated as second-class citizens or worse, while the government saw them as useful distractions and sources of blame. Prior to the introduction of communism, czarist Russia began forcibly conscripting Jews into the military in 1827. Jews were forced into the Pale less than 10 years later in 1835. However, in the 1850s and 1860s, Czar Alexander II initiated a series of reforms meant to allow higher-class Jews to participate in politics and do business outside the Pale.<sup>167</sup> At the time, Poland was under Russian rule, but a rebellion for Polish independence began in Warsaw in 1863 that led to a further entrenchment of Russian authority and culture in Poland in the following decade. Alexander viewed the Jews as useful in continuing the spread of Russian culture in Poland during this time.<sup>168</sup>

The assassination of Alexander II by revolutionaries in March 1881 also acted as a catalyst for riots against Russian Jews. That August, special commissions in various regions of the Pale questioned whether Jewish economic activities were negatively impacting Russians. A quota on Jews was introduced in 1887, and Jewish lawyers were barred from practice without permission in 1889.<sup>169</sup> Jews had a recorded presence in Moscow dating back to the fifteenth century, and the Jewish population grew during the time of the forced conscription of Jews that began in 1827. Between 1891 and 1892,

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<sup>166</sup> John Klier, "Pogroms," YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, accessed December 17, 2019, <https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Pogroms>.

<sup>167</sup> Eli Barnawi ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 190.

<sup>168</sup> Eli Barnawi ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 190-191; "1863-1864 - The Polish Revolt," GlobalSecurity.org, accessed October 4, 2019, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/polish-revolt-1863.htm>.

<sup>169</sup> Eli Barnawi ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 191-192; "Alexander II," Encyclopaedia Britannica, last updated April 25, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alexander-II-emperor-of-Russia>.



however, some 20,000 Jews were forced from the city as new laws ordered the expulsion of Jewish artisans and veterans.<sup>170</sup>

Russia at the time was one of the poorest countries in the world. The country had employed a feudal serfdom until Czar Alexander II did away with the system in 1861, creating a new peasantry outside of Russia's urban areas. Alexander had intended for this new peasantry to be a counterweight to the urban peasantry, which was more vocal about workers' rights. Czar Nicholas II ascended to head of state in 1894 and soon came under pressure to implement reforms, including the creation of a parliament. The First World War led to food shortages and stretched thin other resources. In addition, anti-German sentiment gave rise to suspicions that continued after the war. Jews living in the isolated Pale settlements primarily spoke Yiddish, a mix of German, Hebrew, and Russian. To the untrained ear, however, the language can be indistinguishable from German, which led to accusations against Jews of being German spies. Further raising suspicion of Jews were the increasingly popularized connections between Jews and the growing communist movement.<sup>171</sup>

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published their *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, which advocated for workers to own all land, resources, and the means of production as a community. Only these changes, they wrote, would bring true equality. Socialism, according to Marx, was a stepping-stone toward a fully communist society. Marx himself was not Jewish, though his father had been born Jewish and later converted to Lutheranism. Marx, in fact, was notoriously antisemitic and spoke out against Jewish "filth" and what he considered highly unethical Jewish business practices. Another

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<sup>170</sup> Leonid Praisman, "Moscow," YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, accessed October 4, 2019, <https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Moscow#author>.

<sup>171</sup> Carolyn Harris, "What You Need to Know First to Understand the Russian Revolution," *Smithsonian*, November 28, 2016, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-you-need-know-understand-russian-revolution-180961214/>; Jonathan Smele, "War and Revolution in Russia 1914 - 1921," BBC, last updated March 10, 2011, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/eastern\\_front\\_01.shtml#one](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/eastern_front_01.shtml#one); Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe – The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 51-53.

leader within the early communist movement, Leon Trotsky, was himself Jewish but completely secularized. Nonetheless, Russians created a linkage between the Jewish lineage of Marx and Trotsky and other secular Jews in the early communist movement and the invention of communism itself.<sup>172</sup>

This Jewish association with communism led to a number of pogroms against Jews in Russia before the Bolsheviks revolted against Czar Nicholas in 1917. The Jewish association with communism raised suspicions about Jews around Russia, which would spread to Europe as Russians left the country during the Bolshevik Revolution.

Shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, another enduring conspiracy theory against Jews would capitalize on the increased mistrust of the Russian Jewish community. Beginning in 1903, portions of what were allegedly minutes from the meeting of a secretive Jewish cabal bent on world domination began appearing in the Russian newspaper *Znamya* ("The Banner"). In 1905, Russian writer Sergei Nilus published *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* in full as an appendix to another book.<sup>173</sup> The exact origins of the *Protocols* is unknown, but it is believed that they were influenced by an 1868 book entitled *Biarritz* written by Hermann Goedsche, though the linkage is disputed.<sup>174</sup>

In all, the *Protocols* consist of 24 chapters outlining every aspect of a global Jewish conspiracy to gain world dominance and subjugate "the GOYIM." (*Goyim* is the plural of the biblical Hebrew word *goy*, which translates to "nation." It is commonly used to describe non-Jewish nations in the Hebrew Bible, e.g., *Lo yisa goy al goy cherev*—

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<sup>172</sup> Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012), 242-243; William Nicholls, *Christian Anti-Semitism: A History of Hate* (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1993), 317-318.

<sup>173</sup> "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed November 28, 2018, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/protocols-of-the-elders-of-zion>.

<sup>174</sup> "Tracing the 'Protocols of Zion' Farther Back," *New York Times*, August 25, 1987, <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/08/25/opinion/l-tracing-the-protocols-of-zion-farther-back-603587.html>.

nation shall not take up sword against nation.<sup>175</sup>) Allegedly, these chapters were the recorded minutes of a secret cabal called the Elders of Zion that was orchestrating the conspiracy. The *Protocols* touches on many of the historic antisemitic themes that have previously been described and explored. The *Protocols* portray a Jewish antipathy toward gentiles, portraying them (in Protocol No. 11) as a “flock of sheep” to be slaughtered by Jewish “wolves.”<sup>176</sup> In Protocol No. 12, the alleged Jewish authors admit to controlling the press, which is used to control the masses as well as gain access to governments and government secrets. Declaring the stupidity of “the GOYIM,” the *Protocols* explain that the Jews created and spread Free Masonry in order to spread their influence through the proliferation of Free Mason lodges (Protocol 15). Altogether, the 24 Protocols describe complicated and outlandish plans to dominate and subjugate gentiles under the rule of a new Jewish aristocracy led by a Jewish king.<sup>177</sup>

The initial reaction to the *Protocols* was fear and hatred toward the Jews behind the alleged conspiracy. The Russian Revolution in 1917 saw the exodus of anti-Bolsheviks who brought the *Protocols* with them as they resettled in Europe and the United States. These immigrants viewed themselves as victims of the revolutionary violence that had gripped Russia. They sought to explain the sea change in Russia that had overturned czarist rule and broken down the society they had known. The *Protocols* put a face on the hidden forces that had supposedly orchestrated the revolution as well as other catastrophic global events.

Conspiracies of Judeo-Bolshevism and the Jewish instigators behind the Russian Revolution soon reached the United States, where industrialist Henry Ford helped to further popularize them. In 1920, Ford began to reprint the *Protocols* in his newspaper, *The Dearborn Independent*. Using a ghostwriter, Ford published columns under his

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<sup>175</sup> Isaiah 2:4 (Jewish Publication Society).

<sup>176</sup> Sergei Nilus and Victor Emile Marsden, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* (Middletown: n.p., 2019).

<sup>177</sup> Sergei Nilus and Victor Emile Marsden, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* (Middletown: n.p., 2019).

name that blamed Jews for orchestrating and profiting from World War I, and other conspiracies.<sup>178</sup>

Although the fiction of the *Protocols* is undisputed, conspiracy theorists and others continue to present it as proof of a Jewish cabal guiding world events. Islamist propagandist [Abdullah al-Faisal](#), for example, said he learned of the *Protocols* in prison and recommended it as “an excellent source of knowledge.”<sup>179</sup>

As Russian migrants entered Europe in the twentieth century, they brought with them this distinctive form of Russian antisemitism. The concept that Bolshevism was a Jewish movement began to spread across Europe and Jews’ involvement in other revolutionary activities in Europe (such as the German Bund) led to the theory of Judeo-Bolshevism.<sup>180</sup> The papal nuncio in Munich, Eugenio Pacelli, described the stream of revolutionaries entering Bavaria in letters to the Vatican in April 1919. Pacelli—who would go on to become Pope Pious XII—described gangs of Russian Jews leading the charge. This fueled accusations by the far right, particularly in Germany, that Jews were responsible for Bolshevism.<sup>181</sup> Back in Russia, violence against Jews spiked. Between 1917 and 1923, anti-Bolshevik revolutionaries called “the Whites” repeatedly slaughtered Ukrainian Jews.<sup>182</sup>

This association of Jews with Bolshevism drove the fear of Jewish revolution across Europe after World War I. In the 1930s, the fledgling Nazi regime blamed Jews and communists for Germany’s economic downturn, pointing to the Soviet Union’s role

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<sup>178</sup> “Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed November 28, 2018, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/protocols-of-the-elders-of-zion>; Michael Feldberg, “Henry Ford Invents a Jewish Conspiracy,” My Jewish Learning, accessed October 3, 2019, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/henry-ford-invents-a-jewish-conspiracy/>.

<sup>179</sup> “Former Revolution Muslim Imam Encourages Support for ISIS,” Anti-Defamation League, September 10, 2014, <https://www.adl.org/blog/former-revolution-muslim-imam-encourages-support-for-isis>.

<sup>180</sup> Eli Barnawi ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 196-197.

<sup>181</sup> Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe – The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 12-13.

<sup>182</sup> Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe – The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 33-35.

opposite Germany in the war. Jews were seen as the leaders and financiers of the communist movement, which threatened to topple European governments as it had czarist Russia.<sup>183</sup> A 1920 letter from the Catholic Church of Poland further raised the warning in Europe about Bolshevism:

Bolshevism is striding toward the conquest of the world. The race that has led Bolshevism has already made the world subject to gold and banks, and today, driven by the eternal imperialist desire that flows in its veins, turns to the last campaign of conquest in order to force the nations under the yoke of its regime.... Bolshevism is truly the living embodiment and manifestation of the Antichrist on earth.<sup>184</sup>

Communism, though thoroughly devoted to atheism, had successfully reignited ancient Christian antisemitic tropes that portrayed Jews as agents of Satan. Bolstered by the *Protocols*, Russian antisemitism created an enduring association of Jews with the creation and violence of communism.

## Early to Mid-Twentieth Century: The American Jewish Experience

Jewish immigrants coming to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries referred to America as the Golden Land because of its promises of freedom and opportunity. Nonetheless, Eastern European Jewish immigrants were often met with distrust, while Jewish businessmen were considered part of international

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<sup>183</sup> Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe – The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 14-17.

<sup>184</sup> Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe – The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 26.

Jewish financial conspiracies. U.S. Jews were subjected to legalized professional and social restrictions into the twentieth century.<sup>185</sup>

The United States was also not immune from historic antisemitic accusations. The canard of Jewish dual loyalty spread to the United States as well. In the nineteenth century, the disloyalty accusation manifested as a claim that Jews refused military service and were thus disloyal to the country. In response to these allegations, in 1896, a group of Jewish Civil War veterans formed the Hebrew Union Veterans, which eventually became known as the Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A. (JWV).<sup>186</sup> JWV's mission statement includes fostering love of America, maintaining "true allegiance" to the United States, instilling "love of country and flag," and fighting against bigotry.<sup>187</sup>

The blood libel also reached the United States, though there has been only one recorded case of U.S. Jews being accused of the ritual sacrifice of Christians. On September 22, 1928, a 4-year-old girl named Barbara Griffith disappeared in Massena, New York, two days before Yom Kippur.<sup>188</sup> On the eve of Yom Kippur, Massena's police called in a local rabbi for questioning about Barbara's disappearance, sparking outrage among national Jewish leaders. Barbara was found the following day on September 23,

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<sup>185</sup> Campbell Robertson, Christopher Mele, and Sabrina Tavernise, "11 Killed in Synagogue Massacre; Suspect Charged With 29 Counts," *New York Times*, October 27, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/27/us/active-shooter-pittsburgh-synagogue-shooting.html>; "Ford's Anti-Semitism," PBS American Experience, accessed November 29, 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/henryford-antisemitism/>; Lindsay Chappell, "Views on Jews leave stain on Ford legacy," *Automotive News*, June 16, 2003, <http://www.autonews.com/article/20030616/SUB/306160726/views-on-jews-leave-stain-on-ford-legacy>.

<sup>186</sup> "JWV of the USA – 120 Years of Patriotic Service," Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A., accessed August 23, 2019, <http://jwv.org/wp-content/uploads/JWV-History-Timeline-Final-2.pdf>.

<sup>187</sup> "Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A. Mission Statement," Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A., accessed August 23, 2019, [https://www.jwv.org/who\\_we\\_are/about/](https://www.jwv.org/who_we_are/about/).

<sup>188</sup> "Jews in Upstate Town Resent Attempt to Concoct Ritual Murder Accusation," Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 2, 1928, <https://www.jta.org/1928/10/02/archive/jews-in-upstate-town-resent-attempt-to-concoct-ritual-murder-accusation>; Renee Ghert-Zand, "How a missing girl and atmosphere of hate brought a blood libel to US shores," *Times of Israel*, September 10, 2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-1928-sole-us-case-of-blood-libel-was-incited-in-ny-by-a-lost-4-year-old-girl/>; Julie Grant, "Massena's history still tied to 1928 'blood libel' incident," *North Country Public Radio*, February 14, 2012, <https://www.northcountrypublicradio.org/news/story/19305/20120214/massena-s-history-still-tied-to-1928-blood-libel-incident%3B>;

apparently having gotten lost in a farmer's field. On October 4, Massena Mayor W. Gilbert Hawes issued a letter of apology to Rabbi Stephen Wise, then president of the American Jewish Congress (AJCongress), for summoning a rabbi to the police station on Yom Kippur to answer for the child's disappearance.<sup>189</sup>

Though the Massena case was the only reported blood libel case in the United States, it was not the first time a Jew had been wrongfully accused of murder in America. In Georgia in 1915, Leo Frank, the Jewish superintendent of the Atlanta Pencil factory, was convicted of the April 26 murder of a 13-year-old factory employee, Mary Phagan. He was sentenced to death, but Georgia's governor commuted his sentence. Mobs during the trial and after the sentencing raged against the accused Jew, and one juror even reportedly commented about the "goddamn Jew." Upon learning of the commutation, a lynch mob stormed into Frank's prison, kidnapped, and then hanged him. The Frank lynching inspired both a revival of the Ku Klux Klan and the founding of the Anti-Defamation League. U.S. white supremacists have continued to cite the incident in their antisemitic propaganda.<sup>190</sup>

In the early twentieth century, automaker Henry Ford was bringing international conspiracy theories about Jews to the American public. Whereas in Europe and Russia during the early twentieth century, Jews were associated with communism, Ford accused Jews of abusing capitalism to specifically target his business. He also blamed the Jews for World War I and accused Jews of damaging the U.S. military. His

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<sup>189</sup> "Mayor of Massena Makes an Apology," *New York Times*, October 5, 1928, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1928/10/05/118343684.pdf>; "Massena Inquiry Ordered by Smith," *New York Times*, October 4, 1928, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1928/10/04/91712385.pdf>.

<sup>190</sup> Jacob Bogage, "Leo Frank was lynched for a murder he didn't commit. Now neo-Nazis are trying to rewrite history," *Washington Post*, May 22, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/05/22/leo-frank-was-lynched-for-a-murder-he-didnt-commit-now-neo-nazis-are-trying-to-rewrite-history/?utm\\_term=.862be8a835bc](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/05/22/leo-frank-was-lynched-for-a-murder-he-didnt-commit-now-neo-nazis-are-trying-to-rewrite-history/?utm_term=.862be8a835bc); Matt Lebovic, "The ADL and the KKK, born of the same murder, 100 years ago," *Times of Israel*, May 27, 2013, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/the-adl-and-kkk-born-of-the-same-murder-100-years-ago/>; American Jewish Historical Society, "The Lynching of Leo Frank," *My Jewish Learning*, accessed October 3, 2019, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/leo-frank-is-lynched/>.



newsletter, *The International Jew*, outlined a global Jewish conspiracy to take over the United States. One friend of Ford's wrote in his diary that the industrialist blamed all the evils of the world on "Jews or Jewish capitalists."<sup>191</sup> Ford distributed approximately half-a-million copies of the newsletter.<sup>192</sup> In addition to his automotive empire, Ford published the *Dearborn Independent* newspaper, which ran many of the articles that Ford would include in *The International Jew*. For support, Ford referenced the phony *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, from which he cited heavily. It was Ford's infatuation with the *Protocols* that introduced the forgery to the United States and aided in the forgery's longevity. In 1927, Ford settled out of court with Aaron Sapiro, a Jewish lawyer who brought a defamation suit against Ford. Ford issued an official apology. Later that year, the *Dearborn Independent* shut down.<sup>193</sup>

## Twentieth Century: The Rise of Nazism and the Holocaust

The following section will examine how the Nazis repackaged historical antisemitic tropes and capitalized on established European antisemitism, both latent and overt.

Adolf Hitler drew inspiration from prominent German and Austrian antisemites, as well as the growing populism and xenophobia of the völkisch movement of the nineteenth century. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia provided Hitler with two scapegoats, Jews and communism. The Nazi Party promoted a close association between the two, which Hitler ultimately used to cement his grip on power in 1933.

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<sup>191</sup> "Ford's Anti-Semitism," American Experience, accessed October 4, 2019, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/henryford-antisemitism/>.

<sup>192</sup> "Ford's Anti-Semitism," American Experience, accessed October 4, 2019, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/henryford-antisemitism/>.

<sup>193</sup> David B. Green, "This Day in Jewish History: 1927: Henry Ford Says Sorry for anti-Semitic Spew," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), July 16, 2013, <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-1927-henry-ford-says-sorry-for-anti-semitic-spew-1.5296102>.

German President Paul von Hindenburg named Hitler Germany's chancellor on January 30, 1933. Though the Nazi Party had lost several seats in the November 1932 parliamentary elections, Hindenburg named Hitler chancellor after a series of political deals, raising the alarm of American Jewish leaders concerned about their coreligionists in Germany.<sup>194</sup> On February 27, 1933, the Reichstag burned down. Nazi Party members in the government blamed communists and spread the false rumor that it was the beginning of a communist revolution in Germany. At the urging of the Nazis, the government passed the Reichstag Fire Decree, which limited the press and public assembly, the start of an attack on German civil liberties that the Nazi Party would continue once in power.

Hitler began to impose restrictions on Jews as early as 1933. That year, he restricted Jews from holding public office and the civil service. He barred Jews from farming and working in media. And the citizenship of naturalized Jewish immigrants was revoked. Then, on September 13, 1935, Hitler further fully legalized Jewish persecution with the Nuremberg Race Laws, which excluded Jews from marrying or having sexual relations with pure Germans and rescinded all Jews' citizenship in Germany. The Nuremberg Laws also redefined who was a Jew. Under Jewish law, a Jew must be born of a Jewish mother. The Nuremberg Laws defined anyone with three of four Jewish grandparents as a Jew, entrapping many secular and assimilated German Jews and their descendants who had previously served faithfully in the German army.<sup>195</sup>

Nazi propaganda took advantage of a history of German antisemitism. In 1921, German historian Eduard Fuchs published *Die Juden in der Karikatur: Ein Beitrag zur*

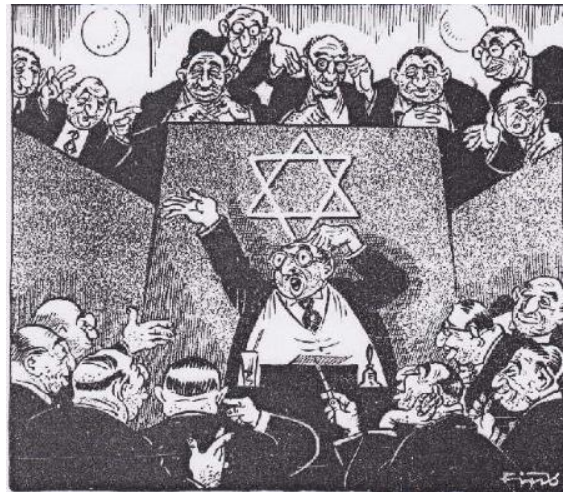
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<sup>194</sup> Stephen Kinzer, "Hitler's Rise Recalled With Sorrow," *New York Times*, January 31, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/01/31/world/hitler-s-rise-recalled-with-sorrow.html?auth=login-email&login=email>; "Rabbis Fear Hitler as Enemy of Jews," *New York Times*, February 6, 1933, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1933/02/06/99209692.pdf>.

<sup>195</sup> Greg Bradsher, "The Nuremberg Laws—Archives Receives Original Nazi Documents That 'Legalized' Persecution of Jews," U.S. National Archives, Winter 2010, <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2010/winter/nuremberg.html>; "Nuremberg Race Laws," U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Holocaust Encyclopedia, accessed May 7, 2020, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nuremberg-laws>.

*Kulturgeschichte* (“The Jews in Caricature: A Contribution to Cultural History”), a comprehensive collection of Jewish caricatures from the fifteenth to twentieth centuries. Such caricatures were prominent in Nazi propaganda during the Holocaust. For example, a 1933 issue of the Nazi propaganda magazine *Der Stürmer*, entitled “Jewish Congress,” featured a caption that read: “Let the Goyim believe that we can be Americans, Englishmen, Germans, or French. When our interests are at stake, we are always Jews, and nothing but.”

The Holocaust was unique in history because of its industrialization of genocide. But Hitler’s tactics leading to the concentration camps relied on historical precedent. As previously noted, German Jews were largely assimilated into German culture. They served in the German army and in politics. Some even belonged to the Nazi Party early on. But after Hitler rose to power in 1933, he began to impose restrictions not just on Jewish religious life but on all of Germany’s Jews. At the opening of the Nuremberg Trials in 1945, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson remarked, “The most serious actions against Jews were outside of any law, but the law itself was employed to some extent. They were the infamous Nuremberg decrees of September 15, 1935.”<sup>196</sup>



Three years after the passage of the Nuremberg Laws, the violent pogroms of Russia arrived in Germany with the blessings of the Nazi regime. On November 7, 1938, a 17-year-old Polish Jew named Herschel Grynszpan shot and killed German official Ernst vom Rath. Grynszpan was reportedly upset about his family’s deportation from

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<sup>196</sup> Greg Bradsher, “The Nuremberg Laws—Archives Receives Original Nazi Documents That ‘Legalized’ Persecution of Jews,” U.S. National Archives, Winter 2010, <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2010/winter/nuremberg.html>.

Germany. Two days later, on November 9, anti-Jewish riots broke out across Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. The mobs destroyed synagogues, ransacked Jewish businesses and schools, and murdered 91 Jews over the course of 48 hours. The Nazi regime did nothing to stop the attacks and blamed them on a thirst for revenge against vom Rath's assassination.<sup>197</sup> The two-day event is today commemorated as *Kristallnacht*, the Night of Broken Glass.<sup>198</sup>

## Latter Half of the Twentieth Century: The Creation of Israel and the Reemergence of Islamic Antisemitism

After the 1948 founding of the State of Israel, the Israeli leadership found itself in conflict with diaspora leaders in the United States. Some Israeli officials had made public statements encouraging American Jews to immigrate to the new state. The advocacy organization American Jewish Committee (AJC), in particular, took umbrage with this, arguing that Israeli demands for *aliyah* (migration to Israel) by American Jews would enflame accusations of dual loyalty and damage the standing of the American Jewish community. In August 1950, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion addressed the issue in a letter to AJC president Jacob Blaustein:

It is most unfortunate that since our State came into being, some confusion and misunderstanding should have arisen as regards the relationship between Israel and the Jewish communities abroad, in particular that of the United States. These misunderstandings are likely to alienate sympathies and create disharmony where friendship and close understanding are of vital necessity. To my mind, the position is perfectly clear. The Jews of the United States, as a

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<sup>197</sup> "Kristallnacht," U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed October 3, 2019, <https://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/kristallnacht>.

<sup>198</sup> Ketzel Levine, "75 Years Ago, Kristallnacht Presaged The Holocaust," NPR, November 9, 2013, <https://www.npr.org/2013/11/09/244204135/75-years-ago-kristallnacht-presaged-the-holocaust>.

community and as individuals, have only one political attachment and that is to the United States of America. They owe no political allegiance to Israel.<sup>199</sup>

As political Zionism spread in the early twentieth century, Islamic antisemitism began to creep back into the public light. The creation of the State of Israel in May 1948 immediately led to a war with the armies of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon. Over the course of the next 10 years, Arab states would expel their Jewish populations. For example, prior to the 1940s, Morocco had a population of approximately 240,000 Jews. By 2015, the country had approximately 3,000 Jews left.<sup>200</sup> Arab nations and Iran expelled approximately 850,000 Jewish citizens between 1948 and 1970.<sup>201</sup>

In his book *The Looming Tower*, Lawrence Wright identified antisemitism as a relatively new phenomenon within Islam that took hold in the early twentieth century as Nazi Germany increased its ties with [Egypt](#) and other newly created Arab nations. According to Wright, Nazi propaganda broadcast on radios around the Middle East and an increasing presence of Christian missionaries “infected the area with this ancient Western prejudice.”<sup>202</sup> Wright credited the prevalence of German advisers to Egyptian and other Arab governments after World War II along with the rise of Islamism for the spread of antisemitism in the Islamic world.<sup>203</sup>

In the mid-twentieth century, Muslim Brotherhood theologian Sayyid Qutb accused Jews of turning Muslims away from the Quran. He wrote that the “true goal of the People of the Book, whether Jews or Christians... is to lead Muslims astray from their religion to

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<sup>199</sup> Charles S. Liebman, “Diaspora Influence on Israel: The Ben-Gurion: Blaustein “Exchange” and Its Aftermath,” *Jewish Social Studies* 36, no. 3/4 (1974): 271-80. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4466837>.

<sup>200</sup> Michael Frank, “In Morocco, Exploring Remnants of Jewish History,” *New York Times*, May 30, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/31/travel/in-morocco-exploring-remnants-of-jewish-history.html>.

<sup>201</sup> Tamar Beeri, “Israel to seek \$250bil in compensation from Arab, Muslim countries,” *Jerusalem Post*, January 5, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/Estimate-of-lost-Jewish-property-value-in-Tunisia-Libya-50-billion-576427>.

<sup>202</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 45.

<sup>203</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 45-46.

the religion of the People of the Book.”<sup>204</sup> He further blamed Jews for “materialism, animal sexuality, the destruction of the family and the dissolution of society.”<sup>205</sup> In his 1965 work *Milestones*, Qutb wrote:

World Jewry[’s]...purpose is to eliminate all limitations, especially the limitations imposed by faith and religion, so that the Jews may penetrate into body politic of the whole world and then may be free to perpetuate their evil designs.<sup>206</sup>

Qutb is widely considered to be the father of modern violent jihadism. His beliefs form the core of the ideologies of such groups as the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaeda, and ISIS. Al-Qaeda leader [Ayman al-Zawahiri](#) credited Qutb’s 1966 execution with igniting the jihadist movement.<sup>207</sup> Qutb’s ideological descendants have since incorporated his virulent form of antisemitism, casting Jews as responsible for all of the ills that have befallen humanity and Muslims in particular. Like Qutb, Zawahiri has referred to both Christians and Jews as “enemies of Islam” and implored Allah to “annihilate the Americans and Jews and the hypocrites and apostates who help them.”<sup>208</sup> Brotherhood ideologue Yusuf Qaradawi in July 2004 accused Jews of spilling Arab blood and declared: “There is no dialogue between us except by the sword and the rifle....”<sup>209</sup>

The idea of Jews being the enemies of God, cast out of favor because of their transgressions, is not limited to only well-known extremists like Qutb and Zawahiri. It has become entrenched within the Islamist narrative. Separate from Islam as a whole,

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<sup>204</sup> David Aaron, *In Their Own Words: Voices of Jihad* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2008), 155.

<sup>205</sup> David Aaron, *In Their Own Words – Voices of Jihad* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2008), 159.

<sup>206</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, (Damascus: Dar al-Ilm: 1965), 111.

<sup>207</sup> Dale C. Eikmeier, “Qutbsim: An Ideology of Islamic-Fascism,” U.S. Army War College 37, no. 1 (2007): 89, <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a485995.pdf>; Paul Berman, “The Philosopher of Islamic Terror,” *New York Times*, March 23, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/23/magazine/the-philosopher-of-islamic-terror.html?pagewanted=all>.

<sup>208</sup> “Ayman al-Zawahiri: In His Own Words,” Anti-Defamation League, July 16, 2009, [http://archive.adl.org/main\\_terrorism/ayman+al-zawahiri250d-2.html#.U469h5RdXMc](http://archive.adl.org/main_terrorism/ayman+al-zawahiri250d-2.html#.U469h5RdXMc).

<sup>209</sup> “Sheikh Yousef Al-Qaradhawi: ‘There is No Dialogue between Us and the Jews Except by the Sword and the Rifle,’” MEMRI, July 27, 2004, <https://www.memri.org/reports/sheikh-yousef-al-qaradhawi-there-no-dialogue-between-us-and-jews-except-sword-and-rifle>.



Islamism is the belief in the need to establish a political order organized around *sharia* (Islamic law). Islamists may advocate the establishment of a *sharia*-based society through violent or non-violent means.<sup>210</sup>

In March and April 2002, the Danish chapter of the international Islamist network [Hizb ut-Tahrir](#) distributed fliers in Copenhagen labeling Jews “a people of slander...a treacherous people” and calling on Muslims to “kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they ... turned you out.”<sup>211</sup> In a May 25, 2012, speech in Michigan, Dawud Walid, executive director of the Michigan chapter of the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), asked rhetorically who has “earned Allah’s wrath” and then answered, “They are the Jews. They are the Jews.”<sup>212</sup> Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, the grand sheik of Al-Azhar and one of Egypt’s leading Sunni Islamic scholars before his death in 2010, met with Israel’s Ashkenazi chief rabbi, Israel Meir Lau, in Cairo on December 15, 1997. Tantawi recounted to Al Jazeera that he met with Lau because Muhammad had met with his enemies in order to contradict their false claims. In 1966, Tantawi wrote a dissertation on the atrocities committed by Jews in the Quran and how Jews seek to deceive Muslims.<sup>213</sup>

[Osama bin Laden](#) specifically included Jews in his February 1996 “Declaration of the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders.” Bin Laden railed against U.S. foreign policy and involvement across the Middle East but blamed America’s actions on a need “to serve the Jews’ petty state and divert attention from its occupation of Jerusalem and murder of Muslims there.”<sup>214</sup> The U.S. Department of

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<sup>210</sup> “Glossary,” Counter Extremism Project, accessed September 13, 2019, <https://www.counterextremism.com/glossary>.

<sup>211</sup> “Hizb ut-Tahrir,” BBC News, August 27, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/newsnight/3182271.stm>.

<sup>212</sup> “Importance of Al Quds in Islam,” YouTube video, 34:35, from a speech at the Islamic Organization of North America (IONA) masjid in Warren, Michigan, posted by “Dawud Walid,” May 25, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LgNxXnAAZA>.

<sup>213</sup> “The Meeting between the Sheik of Al-Azhar and the Chief Rabbi of Israel,” MEMRI, February 8, 1998, <https://www.memri.org/reports/meeting-between-sheik-al-azhar-and-chief-rabbi-israel>.

<sup>214</sup> “Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders,” Federation of American Scientists, February 23, 1998, <https://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa.htm>.



State has accused Arab media of continuing to employ blood libels and other antisemitic conspiracy theories.<sup>215</sup> In December 2018, the annual Doha International Book Fair in [Qatar](#) made headlines for showcasing books such as *Lies Spread by the Jews*; *Talmud of Secrets: Facts Exposing the Jewish Schemes to Control the World*; *The Myth of the Nazi Gas Chambers*; and *Awakening to Jewish Influence in the United States of America* by former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke.<sup>216</sup>

The Jewish rejection of God and Islam memorialized in the Quran has resulted in a dehumanization of Jews by Islamists. In May 2019, Qaradawi declared that Allah punished the Jews for rejecting him by making them into “apes and pigs.”<sup>217</sup> On July 1, 2014, Mostafa Saad Hannout, an imam at Masjid Toronto mosque, issued a prayer of solidarity on Facebook with the people of Gaza, praying for God to “give them victory over Your enemy and their enemy” and to “destroy the grandchildren [descendants] of the apes and pigs.”<sup>218</sup>

The idea that God transformed Jews into apes and pigs as punishments for breaking biblical laws can be traced to three separate passages in the Quran: Suras 2:65, 5:60, and 7:166. In Sura 2:65, the phrase is referenced as a punishment for breaking the

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<sup>215</sup> Cathryn J. Prince, “Jewish refugees from Arab lands seek justice at United Nations,” Times of Israel, December 2, 2015, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/jewish-refugees-from-arab-lands-seek-justice-at-united-nations/>; Michael Wilner, “Despite Alignment with Israel, Arab Powers Still Spreading Anti-Semitism,” *Jerusalem Post*, May 31, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Despite-alignment-with-Israel-Arab-powers-still-spreading-antisemitism-558806>; “International Religious Freedom Report for 2017,” U.S. Department of State, May 2018, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>.

<sup>216</sup> “Qatar accused of promoting anti-Semitism at its state-run book fair,” *National* (Abu Dhabi), December 6, 2018, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/qatar-accused-of-promoting-anti-semitism-at-its-state-run-book-fair-1.799626>.

<sup>217</sup> “Ramadan Religious Lesson By Muslim Brotherhood Spiritual Leader Sheikh Yousef Al-Qaradawi, Published By Qatari Government Daily: The Jews Opposed Muhammad, Therefore Allah Cursed Them And Turned Them Into Apes And Pigs; The Christians Were Stricken With Ideological Blindness And Strayed,” MEMRI, May 21, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/reports/ramadan-religious-lesson-muslim-brotherhood-spiritual-leader-sheikh-yousef-al-qaradawi>.

<sup>218</sup> Jonathan D. Halevi, “Why do Canadian Imams call Jews “the sons of the pigs and apes?”” Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, March 3, 2019, <http://jcpa.org/article/why-do-canadian-imams-call-jews-the-sons-of-the-pigs-and-apes/>.

Sabbath: “You know about those of you who broke the Sabbath, and so We said to them, ‘Be like apes! Be outcasts!’”<sup>219</sup> In Sura 5:60:

Say, ‘Shall I tell you who deserves a worse punishment from God than [the one you wish upon] us? Those God distanced from Himself, was angry with, and condemned as apes and pigs, and those who worship idols: they are worse in rank and have strayed further from the right path.’<sup>220</sup>

Finally, in Sura 7:166: “When, in their arrogance, they persisted in doing what they had been forbidden to do, We said to them, ‘Be like apes!’ Be outcasts!” In commentary to his Oxford University Press translation of the Quran, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem wrote that some scholars take these verses literally to mean that Jews were transformed into apes and pigs, but these verses are actually meant as figures of speech describing Sabbath transgressors.<sup>221</sup> Nonetheless, the allegation has become widespread across the Islamic world among those seeking to dehumanize Jews.

Muslim Brotherhood member and former Egyptian president [Mohammed Morsi](#) also directly referred to Zionists as the descendants of apes and pigs in 2013. Jeffrey Goldberg of the *Atlantic* questioned why the story did not merit more global media attention and outrage, concluding that it was a case of low expectations as the insult is common among hardliners in the Islamic world.<sup>222</sup>

[Omar Abdel-Rahman](#), a.k.a. the Blind Sheikh, extended the apes and pigs metaphor to include all Americans, which he accused of being “descendants of apes and pigs who have been feeding from the dining tables of the Zionists, Communists, and

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<sup>219</sup> M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. *The Qur’an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2:65, 9.

<sup>220</sup> M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. *The Qur’an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5:60, 73-74.

<sup>221</sup> M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. *The Qur’an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 9.

<sup>222</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, “Egyptian President Calls Jews ‘Sons of Apes and Pigs’; World Yawns,” *Atlantic*, January 14, 2013, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/01/egyptian-president-calls-jews-sons-of-apes-and-pigs-world-yawns/267131/>.

colonialists.”<sup>223</sup> Even though Abdel-Rahman applied the label to Americans, Jews (i.e., Zionists) remained the cause. One of the more recent American examples of Islamist dehumanization of Jews is Louis Farrakhan, who in an October 2018 video posted to Twitter declared that he’s not an antisemite, he’s anti-termite.<sup>224</sup> Twitter initially said the video did not violate its terms of service agreement.<sup>225</sup> Twitter removed the tweet nine months later after it introduced a new rule banning “language that dehumanizes others on the basis of religion.”<sup>226</sup>

## Conclusion

Antisemitism throughout history has been both a response to the presence of Jews and a manifestation of the fear of Jews. Jews often represented the ultimate Other in society. They remained at the same time a part of and separate from the rising Christian civilization in Europe.

Jews remained separated from society partly by their own habits but largely by decree. The communal nature of Jewish religious practice dictated that Jews live near each other in order to have the proper quorum for prayers and to uphold travel restrictions on the Sabbath and holidays. This led to the development of Jewish quarters in medieval towns, which became ghettos after official decrees ordered that Jews should be physically separated. Jews remained behind walls for 400 years, further contributing to suspicions as to why it was necessary to separate them from society.

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<sup>223</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 201.

<sup>224</sup> Jeremy Sharon, “Farrakhan Compares Jews to Termites, Says Jews Are ‘Stupid,’” *Jerusalem Post*, October 17, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Farrakhan-compares-Jews-to-termites-says-Jews-are-stupid-569627>.

<sup>225</sup> “Video of Louis Farrakhan comparing Jews to termites removed from Facebook,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 21, 2018, <https://www.jta.org/2018/10/21/united-states/farrakhan-termites-video-removed-facebook>.

<sup>226</sup> “Louis Farrakhan’s 2018 tweet comparing Jews to termites is gone after Twitter policy change,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 9, 2019, <https://www.jta.org/quick-reads/louis-farrakhans-2018-tweet-comparing-jews-to-termites-is-gone-after-twitter-policy-change>.

What took place behind the walls of the ghetto remained a mystery for most. This created a natural aversion among Christians to Jews living in their midst, and therefore, few made the effort to look beyond what they had been taught. They instead theorized based on their limited knowledge and suspicions. The misunderstood nature of Jewish practices helped feed into myths surrounding them. Observers would see Jews hanging a *mezuzah*—a scroll of biblical verses—on their doors and recall something from the Bible about Jews in Egypt painting their doorframes with blood. The natural conclusion was that Jews were again using blood for some sort of ritual purpose, contributing to the development and promulgation of the blood libel, that Jews employed Christian blood in sacrifices and other rituals such as matzah preparation.

In the sixteenth century, a legend emerged in Prague of a giant sculpted from clay and given life by a rabbi using Jewish mysticism in order to protect the Jewish community. According to legend, the Golem of Prague would appear when the Jews of Prague were in crisis.<sup>227</sup> To the Jews the Golem represented hope for a savior. To the outside world, however, the Golem represented Jewish entanglement with the occult and further ingrained fear of unknown Jewish practices.

Like Christianity, Islam has promoted the notion of Jewish rejection: God rejected the Jews based on their rejection of biblical laws. Still, Jews living under Muslim rule historically were not subjected to the same restrictive conditions as those living in Christian Europe. Jews were People of the Book, and God had given them opportunities to repent if they desired. Even so, Jews in Islamic societies were still largely relegated to second-class status at best.

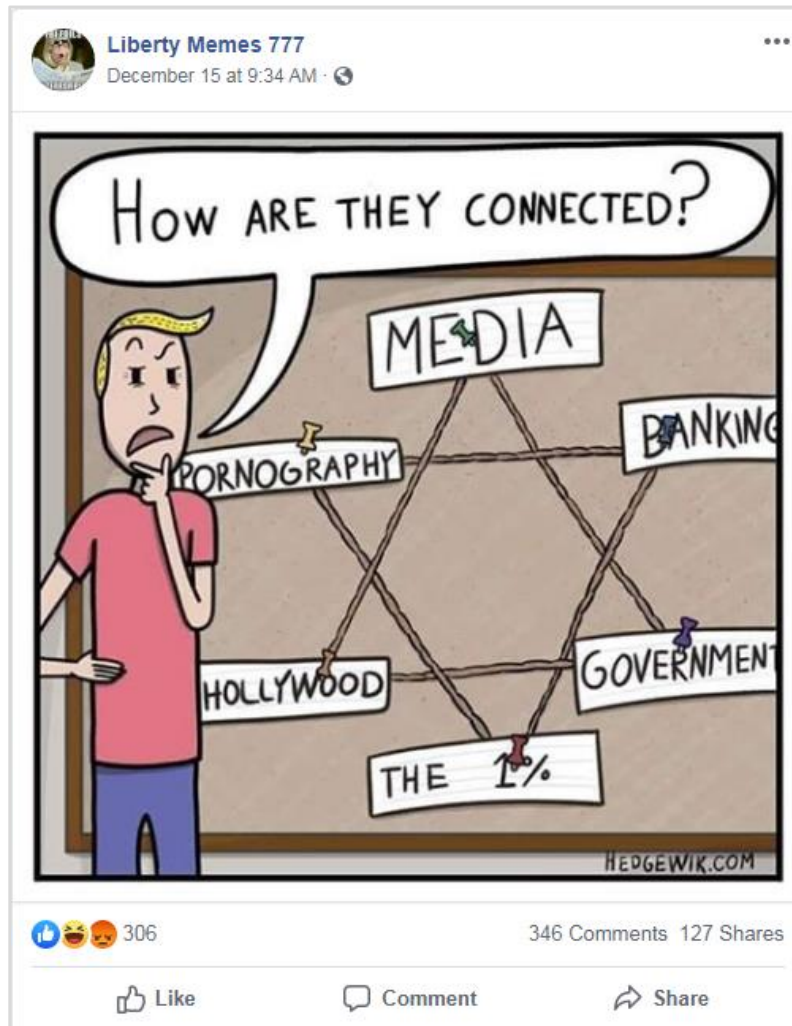
These religious roots of antisemitism informed centuries of restrictions and conspiracies. This culminated in mass events like the Spanish Inquisition and the

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<sup>227</sup> Dan Bilefsky, “Hard Times Give New Life to Prague’s Golem,” *New York Times*, May 10, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/11/world/europe/11golem.html>.

Holocaust, while feeding everyday bigotry. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, Jewish political fortunes had wholly shifted. Jews enjoyed unprecedented political and economic freedoms and had reestablished their biblical homeland in Israel. This ascension began slowly with Napoleon Bonaparte's emancipation of French Jews in the early eighteenth century, but it wouldn't be until after the horrific events of the Holocaust that Jews would attain true emancipation. The large Jewish migrations to America of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries came at the same time that other nationalities and ethnic groups were migrating to the United States. Like other minorities, Jews were subjected to widespread discrimination, but eventually, discrimination gave way to success. And that success bred jealousy among those left behind.

Russian immigrants to America brought with them tales of *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* and rumors of Jews' role in the violent revolution that had overthrown the czar. The earliest form of Christian antisemitism holds that Jews betrayed Jesus and then demanded his death at the hands of the Romans. Here again were tales from Russia of Jews betraying their king—this time the czar—and overturning the societal order. This pattern has repeated throughout history, from the machinations of Jews murdering William of Norwich in 1144 to fears that Jews were causing the bubonic plague by poisoning water wells. Antisemitic conspiracy theories have been and remain focused on the alleged role of Jews behind the scenes, carrying out secret plans to dominate non-Jews.



*A meme posted to Facebook in December 2019 alleging a global Jewish conspiracy.*

With the rise of the Internet and, in particular, social media, these theories have taken on new life as antisemites now have new ways to spread their propaganda and connect with others who share their views. While the Internet has made it easier to find information that dispels myths and conspiracy theories, it has also made it easier for those who traffic in conspiracies to find followers and create echo chambers that affirm and reinforce those conspiracies. Despite the best of intentions, centuries of ingrained antisemitic attitudes, will take a great deal more time to overcome.