Invitation to Judaism – Lesson Plan – Antisemitism (and Differences Between Judaism and Christianity)
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Reading: Robinson, pp. 460-504, Kushner, pp. 259-354, Telushkin, pp. 164-6, 173-201, 205-234, 237-249, 260-3, 373-422, 507-521 (these selections include some historical and other material not related to Antisemitism but which I felt was important reading)
Samuel Sandmel *We Jews and Jesus*

1. **Anti-Semitism** (See special Bibliography for extra reading)
   a. Christianity and Anti-Semitism
      i. Origins of Christian anti-Semitism: claim of Deicide, law vs. love, “Pharisees” (cf. Travers Hereford), rejection of “Christ”, Blood libel, Shylock archetype of Jewish greed/penury, Church vs. Synagogue portrayals, necessity of Jewish remnant to testify to truth of “Old Testament” – but should be subjugated to Church, the Disputations, the first “Ghettos”, the Holocaust (not Christian, but aided by centuries of prior European antisemitism)
      ii. Is this the origin of Antisemitism? Cf. Prager/Telushkin theory
      iii. Modern Christian-Jewish dialog: Two (or more?) paths to God (Philip Cunningham and Mary Boys in Catholic world, many others)
      iv. Mel Gibson’s *The Passion*
   b. Protocols of the Elders of Zion – Czarist Russian forgery – the Jews control the world
   c. Modern Islamist Anti-Semitism (adopted in many cases from European/Christian anti-Semitism) and Modern Anti-Zionism
   d. Holocaust denial – e.g. the Deborah Lipstadt case in England (Movie: *Denial*)
   e. The [Anti-Defamation League](https://www.adl.org)
   f. Jews – Canary in the Coal Mine? – Martin Niemoller

2. **Differences Between Judaism and Christianity** (Read Samuel Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, or related book)
   a. **Idea of God** – One, undivided, incorporeal Being. God did not – and will not – take the form of a human being. All the heroes of the Bible are humans with two human parents.
   b. **Free Will vs. Original Sin** – no permanent taint on humanity from Garden of Eden (See, e.g., Ezekiel 18:4)
   c. **Sin and Atonement** (cf. my High Holy Day sermon on how we atone without sacrifice today) – Jewish view is *we no longer need sacrifices to atone for our sins* (if indeed we ever did), therefore do not need to believe Jesus “died for our sins”. (See, e.g. Maimonides, *Guide*, Part III, Chapter 32; Psalm 50:7-12)
• Fasting and Prayer atone for sins. (See Hosea 14:1-2; Book of Jonah and Book of Esther, fasting and prayer atones, see, also I Kings 8:46-50)

• Monetary donations atone for sins. (Exodus 30:14-16)

• Acts of Loving Kindness atone for sins. (Hosea 6:6, acts of loving kindness are better than sacrifices, see also Avot D'Rabbi Natan 4:5 and Talmud Bavli Sukkah 49b, Rabbi Elazar quoting Proverbs 21:3)

• Also, Jewish view is that God hates human sacrifice. (eg. Lev. 18:21, Deut. 18:10, II Kings 16:3, Jer. 32:35, and others; cf. Abraham and Isaac – which God stopped). So how can human sacrifice now atone for sins of all humanity?

• Sacrifices were each person’s responsibility. The one who brings the sacrifice is actually sacrificing something – eg. some of his/her wealth – as gift to God. But we do not believe in “vicarious atonement” – that someone else can sacrifice (Jesus, as it were, sacrificed his own life) – on our behalf.

d. Jesus/Messiah

i. Jewish view of Messiah: “anointed” leader of Jewish people, brings about establishment of Jewish independence in homeland (Israel), ingathering of exiles, peace and prosperity in world, universal recognition of God (but not necessarily via Jewish faith), Israel/Jews seen by others as good people

ii. Jewish view of Jesus: not Messiah, not Son of God, not Prophet, perhaps a charismatic teacher/preacher, perhaps believed he was Messiah in Jewish sense, but since he was captured and executed by Romans, he cannot be Messiah.

iii. But essentially: he is not really on our radar scope, not part of our sacred/canonical literature.

e. Asceticism vs. Enjoyment of life’s beauty, goodness, and pleasures

f. Faith/Love vs. Law – false dichotomy (e.g. Ahavat Olam/Ahavah Rabbah)

g. Interpretations of Bible – do not see Tanakh (“Old Testament”) in light of “New Testament” – do not seek to prove Jesus from Tanakh and we reject those interpretations (but recognize Christian right to their interpretations)

First they came for the communists

In Germany they first came for the communists and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn’t speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me – and by that time no one was left to speak up.

– Pastor Martin Niemoller

Martin Niemoller (1892 – 1984) was a German Protestant minister and a leader of the church’s opposition to Hitler. He was interned in Nazi concentration camps from 1937-1945. In the 1950’s and 60’s, he was West Germany’s foremost pacifist and foe of nuclear armaments.
Bibliography on Anti-Semitism

Books:

**History of Antisemitism**
Cunningham, Philip *Pondering the Passion - What's at Stake for Christians and Jews?* (modern Catholic scholar discusses Mel Gibson's movie)
Katz, Jacob *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Jewish-Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times* (Schocken Paperback 1962)
Nicholls, William *Christian Antisemitism: A History of Hate* (New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1993)
Parkes, James *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society) (Focus on the early Church and anti-Semitism)
Wistrich, Robert *S. Antisemitism - The Longest Hatred*

**Protocols of the Elders of Zion**
Bronner, Stephen *A Rumor About the Jews – Antisemitism, Conspiracy, and the Protocols of Zion*
Jacobs, Steven and Mark Weitzman *Dismantling the Big Lie - The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*

**Modern Antisemitism**

Web Sites:
American Jewish Committee [http://www.ajc.org/](http://www.ajc.org/)
Indiana University Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism [https://isca.indiana.edu/](https://isca.indiana.edu/)
MEMRI Antisemitism Documentation Project [http://www.memri.org/antisemitism.html](http://www.memri.org/antisemitism.html)
U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum [https://www.ushmm.org/antisemitism](https://www.ushmm.org/antisemitism)
Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism [http://sicsa.huji.ac.il/](http://sicsa.huji.ac.il/)
Yad Vashem [https://www.yadvashem.org/education/online-courses/antisemitism.html](https://www.yadvashem.org/education/online-courses/antisemitism.html) and [https://www.yadvashem.org/education/educational-videos/video-toolbox/hevt-antisemitism.html](https://www.yadvashem.org/education/educational-videos/video-toolbox/hevt-antisemitism.html)
The term “anti-Semite” was coined in Germany in 1879 by Wilhelm Marr in his pamphlet “The Way to Victory of Germanicism over Judaism” to refer to the anti-Jewish manifestations of the period and to give Jew-hatred a more scientific sounding name. According to historian Deborah Lipstadt, instead of using the word “Judenhass” – hatred of Jews - he chose “Antisemitismus” – hatred of the Jewish race. Lipstadt says he wanted an “all-encompassing word: a word that would include Jews who were no longer practicing the religion, Jews who might even have converted – because he also was influenced by the idea that it was in your blood.”

Zack Rothbart noted that “Anti-Semitism” did not appear in the original edition of the Oxford English Dictionary. He quotes from a July 5, 1900, letter from James Murray, the founding editor, to Claude Montefiore, the great-nephew of Moses Montefiore. “He said ‘the material for anti-words was so enormous that much violence had to be employed’ to include them all. ‘Anti-semite and its family were then probably very new in English use, and not thought likely to be more than passing nonce-words,’ Murray added, ‘& hence they did not receive treatment in a separate article. Probably if we had to do that post now, we should have to make Anti-semite a main word, and add ‘hence Anti-semitic, Anti-semitism.’ He also noted, ‘The man in the street would have said Anti-Jewish.’”

“Anti-Semitism” has been accepted and understood to mean hatred of the Jewish people. Dictionaries define the term as: “Theory, action, or practice directed against the Jews” and “Hostility towards Jews as a religious or racial minority group, often accompanied by social, economic and political discrimination.”

Today, there is a debate as to whether the word should be spelled without a hyphen.

Some argue the use of the word “Semitic” is misleading and confusing used in the context of Jew hatred. In its argument for eliminating the hyphen, the ADL noted the word “was first used by a German historian in 1781 to bind together languages of Middle Eastern origin that have some linguistic similarities. The speakers of those languages, however, do not otherwise have shared heritage or history. There is no such thing as a Semitic peoplehood.”

Arabs are “Semites” and, therefore, sometimes claim they cannot be anti-Semitic or the word should apply to hatred directed toward them. Matt Lebovic gave the example of a 2015 speech by consumer rights advocate Ralph Nader: “[Supporters of Israel] know how to accuse people of anti-Semitism if any issue on Israel is criticized, even though the worst anti-Semitism in the world today is against Arabs and Arab-Americans.” He added, “The Semitic race is Arabs and Jews and Jews do not own the phrase anti-Semitism.”
This, however, is a semantic distortion that ignores the reality of Arab discrimination and hostility toward Jews. Arabs and other speakers of Semitic languages, like any other people, can indeed be anti-Semitic.

The ADL also argues that Marr’s use of the word “Antisemitismus” added “racial and pseudo-scientific overtones to the animus behind the word.” Furthermore, “hatred toward Jews, both today and in the past, goes beyond any false perception of a Jewish race; it is wrapped up in complicated historical, political, religious, and social dynamics.”

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) expressed a similar concern “that the hyphenated spelling allows for the possibility of something called ‘Semitism,’ which not only legitimizes a form of pseudo-scientific racial classification that was thoroughly discredited by association with Nazi ideology, but also divides the term, stripping it from its meaning of opposition and hatred toward Jews.” The IHRA also noted that “in German, French, Spanish and many other languages, the term was never hyphenated.”

Allison Kaplan Sommer noted this debate is not new. Holocaust historian Yehuda Bauer wrote in 1994: “Anti-Semitism is altogether an absurd construction, since there is no such thing as ‘Semitism’ to which it might be opposed.”

Today, the hyphen is eschewed by scholars in the field and journals, such as the Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism and Antisemitism Studies. Several organizations that deal with the issue, such as the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, World Jewish Congress, Yad Vashem and the ADL have also dropped the hyphen. The Simon Wiesenthal Center has not.

Ken Jacobson, the ADL’s deputy national director, seemingly contradicted his organization’s position, telling the Times of Israel that the debate is “intellectually dueling and largely divorced from reality.” He said it “is an overreaction to Arab claims that they can’t be anti-Semites because they are a Semitic people.” Jacobson added that eliminating the hyphen “will not enhance anyone’s understanding and could even undermine a word that aptly conveys the power of this evil.”

Alvin H. Rosenfeld, director of Indiana University’s Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, took a slightly different view. “Will spelling the word in an unhyphenated way as ‘antisemite’ and not ‘anti-Semite’ correct its misuse?” he asked. “Probably not for those who willfully misuse it, but for others, it may clarify that no one ever beat or cursed a Jew because he hated ‘Semitism,’ but only because he hated Jews.”

The Associated Press is generally considered the authority on usage for the media and it continues to use anti-Semitism, as do major newspapers such as the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and Time Magazine. Andrew Silow-Carroll, editor-in-chief of The New York Jewish Week told Kaplan, “Although the case for ‘antisemitism’ is strong, we are sticking with anti-Semitism because it appears to be the preferred spelling among most of the Jewish institutions we cover, and because it is consistent with our own newspaper’s practices going back decades.”

Other Jewish publications, including the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, the Times of Israel, the Forward, the Jewish News Syndicate and Tablet all also retain the hyphen. The Jerusalem
Most dictionaries, such as Merriam-Webster, and encyclopedias, such as Britannica also hyphenate the word. The word is also hyphenated in the U.S. State Department definition, but is not by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

The IHRA argues by eliminating the hyphen “the meaning of the generic term for modern Jew-hatred is clear” with “no room for confusion or obfuscation”; however, there is little evidence of such misunderstanding. As Silow-Carroll said in editorial on the subject, “For some, the lowercase somehow demotes the word or concept itself, or represents a solution to a very minor and rarified problem.”

Other than the occasional claim by Arabs that they cannot be anti-Semitic, there is little evidence of confusion regarding the word’s usage and meaning. The Times of Israel reported that “very few experts expressed concern about anti-Semitism continuing to be spelled with a hyphen among the general public.” As noted above, dictionaries and the media use “anti-Semitism” and that is also the spelling we have adopted in the Jewish Virtual Library.

Oxford English Dictionary; Webster’s Third International Dictionary;
“Spelling of antisemitism vs. anti-Semitism,” ADL;
Allison Kaplan Sommer, “Anti-antisemitism? A Battle Rages Over the Jewish Hyphen,” Haaretz, (May 20, 2020);
Strasbourg Cathedral
On the border of France and Germany
Built: 1176 - 1439

One of the first known women sculptors to be encountered in the whole history of Western Art assisted in building this cathedral. Her name is Sabina von Steinbach, and she assisted her father, the builder of the Strasbourg Cathedral. She was responsible for the statues personifying the church and the synagogue near the south portals of the cathedral. http://home.triad.rr.com/michaelkey/strasbourg.htm

To the left of the portal as you face Strasbourg's Cathedral of Notre Dame are two statues - Ecclesia and Synagoga, circa 1230. The one on the left represents Christianity - a woman adorned with a crown and wearing a flowing gown. She holds a staff with a cross in one hand and a chalice in the other, and grins in triumph over her enemy. The one on the right represents Judaism. Her garment is disheveled and clings tightly to her body. Her staff is broken and the tablets of the Law are about to slip from her hand. As is typical of Ecclesia and Synagoga, we do not see her face - her head is bowed and she is blindfolded because she cannot see the truth of Christianity. http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Strasbourg.html
Synagoga and Ecclesia in Our Time

The Story of the Creation, Dedication, and Blessing of the Original Sculpture by Joshua Koffman that Enshrines the Institute’s Mission

“This statue is exactly a demonstration of two sisters of the same dignity, the Church and the Synagogue.” – Rev. Federico Lombardi, Director of the Vatican Press Office.

"I have no doubt it will become a turning point in the History of Art." – Prof. Mariano Akerman, the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro.
Transforming an image of hostility to esteem

The Medieval Motif of Synagoga and Ecclesia

And Its Transformation in a Post-Nostra Aetate Church

In the Middle Ages, the feminine figures of Ecclesia (Church) and Synagoga (Synagogue) were a familiar motif in Christian art. It was a visual presentation of the understanding of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism that prevailed in that era. Mary C. Boys has described it as follows:

We can see a [particular] pattern in the Christian iconography of the dual figures Synagoga and Ecclesia. For many Christians of the Middle Ages, the status of Judaism evoked images from Lamentations (1:1; 5:16-17):

How lonely sits the city
that once was full of people!
How like a widow she has become,
she that was great among the
nations!
She that was a princess among the
provinces
has become a vassal.

The crown has fallen from our head;
woe to us, for we have sinned!
Because of this our hearts are sick,
because of these things our eyes
have grown dim.

Like Leah of the weak eyes (see Genesis 29:17), Synagoga was blind to Christ. As second-century apologist Justin Martyr

Synagoga and Ecclesia above the portico of the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris (c. 1240). Synagoga is blindfolded by a serpent wrapped around her eyes, her crown is at her feet, and the tablets of the law are about to slip from her hand.
said to the Jew Trypho, "Leah is your people and the synagogue, while Rachel is our church ..., Leah has weak eyes, and the eyes of your spirit are also weak." Synagoga symbolizes an obsolete Judaism.

In some depictions of this allegorical pair, we see a triumphant *Ecclesia* standing erect next to the bowed, blindfolded figure of the defeated yet dignified *Synagoga* (e.g., the thirteenth-century stone figures in the cathedrals of Strasbourg, Freiburg, Bamberg, Magdeburg, Reims, and Notre Dame [Paris]). Though the church has triumphed over synagogue, the latter is a tragic rather than sinister figure—a woman conquered, with her crown fallen, staff broken, and Torah dropping to the ground. ...

Other representations of *Synagoga*, particularly in the Late Middle Ages, present a more contemptible figure. For example, in a fifteenth-century portrayal of the crucifixion, *Ecclesia* holds a chalice to receive the blood from the pierced heart of Jesus, whereas Synagoga turns away from him, in the clasp of a devil who rides atop her neck and blinds her to the Christ by covering her eyes. The association with the devil evokes a malevolent *Synagoga*. ... Many [Medieval Christians] would have viewed the figures of *Synagoga* and *Ecclesia*, and thereby absorbed a dangerous lesson: Judaism no longer has reason to exist.


Contrast this long-lived derogatory Christian attitude toward Judaism with these recent words of Pope Francis:

We hold the Jewish people in special regard because their covenant with God has never been revoked, for “the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable” (Rom 11:29). ... Dialogue and friendship with the children of Israel are part of the life of Jesus’ disciples. The friendship which has grown between us makes us bitter and sincerely regret the terrible persecutions which they have endured, and continue to endure, especially those that have involved Christians. God continues to work among the people of the Old Covenant and to bring forth treasures of wisdom which flow from their encounter with his word. For this reason, the Church also is enriched when she receives the values of Judaism.

Clearly Catholic attitudes have changed. A new relationship of respect has replaced the previous one of disdain. The turning point was the Second Vatican Council declaration, *Nostra Aetate*, issued on October 28, 1965.

The statue commissioned by Saint Joseph’s University to mark the declaration's 50th anniversary reinterprets the medieval motif of *Synagoga* and *Ecclesia* to reflect Catholic teaching today. "*Synagoga* and *Ecclesia* in Our Time" depicts Synaogue and Church as both proud crowned women, living in covenant with God side by side, and learning from one another’s sacred texts and traditions about their distinctive experiences of the Holy One.

"There exists a rich complementarity between the Church and the Jewish people that allows us to help one another mine the riches of God’s word." - Pope Francis

Meet the Sculptor: Joshua Koffman

SJU Dedicates Its Nostra Aetate Sculpture; Later Blessed by Pope Francis

Video: Philadelphia’s Nostra Aetate Celebration

Texts from the dedication ceremony

Video: Pope Francis blesses the sculpture

Video: Joshua Koffman on designing and creating the sculpture (2018)

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- Mission Statement (https://www.sju.edu/about-sju/mission-statement)
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I hate talking about anti-Semitism.

I hate the way Israelis talk about anti-Semitism as a reaffirmation of Zionism. The discourse often embodies a combination of the perverse joy of “I told you so,” with a measure of paternalism, as Israel appoints itself as the solution and the protector. This is especially so when it comes to North American Jews, who dared to posit themselves as an equal alternative to Israel.

“We told you that you would never be at home, be accepted, and be safe, anywhere other than the Jewish homeland,” is a common Israeli mantra. While Israelis condemn anti-Semitism, they do not believe that it can be eradicated nor even effectively combated. Anti-Semitism, they believe, is inherent to diasporic life and can only be overcome through a dismantlement of the Diaspora itself, and until this occurs, Israel anoints itself as the spokesman for the powerless Jew.

I hate this discourse, because it perpetuates the endemic disrespect that many Israelis have toward the quality, vitality, and importance of Jewish life outside Israel. I hate it, because it diminishes the essence of Zionism, and imprisons it in concepts that were critically important in the 1920s and 1930s, but which are inadequate for the 21st century. I hate it, because it presents a façade of care that serves to whitewash disrespect and growing alienation.

I hate some of the discourse around anti-Semitism in North America. Some of it exaggerates the problem and paints contemporary Jewish life with pre-Holocaust categories, thus diminishing the remarkable success and strength of North American Jewish life.

I hate when anti-Semitism takes over all Jewish discourse. I hate to talk about anti-Semitism, because I want to talk about what Judaism can learn from and contribute to the modern world, and not merely how we can survive it. I was raised on the belief that contemporary Jewish life, whether in Israel or North America, had a critical choice to make between Auschwitz and Sinai, as to which was to guide our lives and shape our core identity. Auschwitz was to be remembered and mourned, but it is Sinai and the teachings of the Jewish tradition over the millennia that give Jewish life meaning and value, and consequently, a future.

I was raised to believe that the fundamental challenge of Jewish life is the development of ways to enable our 3,000-year-old tradition to learn from and incorporate the best of modern thought. That the greatness of our tradition is measured not merely by the depth of its past, but by the courage of its interpreters to ensure that the tradition is relevant and reflects the best of what we can learn from others.

And so, I was raised to hate to talk about anti-Semitism, and to simply ignore it. Talking about it, thinking about it, and engaging with it, recreated the spiritual, intellectual, and moral ghetto walls from which we had finally been redeemed. Talking about it shifts Jewish discourse inward, instead of upward, and makes survival the principal concern of Jewish life, leaving no oxygen for the critical work of meaning, value, and purpose.
But.

While I hate talking about anti-Semitism, I hate anti-Semitism even more. I hate what it does to Jews. I hate the fear that it instills. I hate the pain and suffering that it causes. I hate the attention that it demands. And as we are experiencing with increased frequency, it does demand attention, even from those of us who hate to talk about it.

I don’t want to offer an analysis of anti-Semitism’s root causes, why it is reemerging today, and the steps we need to take to best protect ourselves. Instead, I want to talk about how to talk about anti-Semitism in a way that may avoid some of the pitfalls of that conversation.

1) We must not use an anti-Semitic incident as a vehicle or opportunity for our own ideological aggrandizement. For example, when an anti-Semitic attack occurs, Israelis must refrain from calling on Diaspora Jews to make aliyah, no matter how well-meaning those Israelis may be. Imagine how we Israelis would react if, after a terrorist attack here, Diaspora Jews called on us to send our children abroad because it isn’t safe to raise them in Israel. When the other is experiencing loss, pain, and fear, whether from terror, war, or anti-Semitic violence, it is not the time to offer self-serving “solutions” that only reinforce our own ideological certainties.

Similarly, in the toxic partisan political environment of today’s America, anti-Semitic attacks cannot be used as a vehicle to denounce the moral bankruptcy of one’s political opponents. Too often we tolerate and excuse the anti-Semitism that comes from “our” political camp. Its perpetrators are classified as deranged instead of evil, in order to maintain political alliances and political correctness. It is only such anti-Semitism that comes from the “other” camp that is classified as threatening and worthy of condemnation.

When we politicize anti-Semitism, we undermine the universal condemnation that anti-Semitic attacks deserve and require. Most significantly, we create deep divisions within our own community, and prevent us from uniting to combat the threats we face. It is critical that our discourse embrace a zero-tolerance policy — not only against anti-Semitism itself, but against those Jews and Jewish institutions which allow it to be politicized.

2) We need to talk about anti-Semitism in a way that does not minimize its dangers, but also does not falsely conflate the reality in America with that of pre-Holocaust Germany, or even that of contemporary France. It is important that we talk about the legitimate concerns and fears that anti-Semitism is generating, which are free from the false claim that Jewish life is existentially endangered. It is not, and Jews in North America know this. While they are concerned, they are not selling their real estate holdings or packing emergency go-bags.

It is critical that we remember that we are not fighting government-instituted anti-Semitism, but an anti-Semitism which the government itself is committed to fighting. In combating the attacks on where our people gather — our synagogues, community centers, and neighborhoods — we are neither powerless, nor alone. We are not experiencing a second Kristallnacht. Both in Israel and in North America, we are at home and have at our disposal both immense resources and deep and loyal allies. As a result, we can and must maintain a discourse about the current wave of anti-Semitism, which embraces the conviction that, with a concentrated effort, we can prevail and make Jews feel safe again.

3) We need to avoid the discourse that portrays anti-Semitism as a unique phenomenon and the Jews as uniquely attacked. I don’t deny that there are ample historical arguments which point to
anti-Semitism as distinct in its longevity, its ferocity, and the extent of its destructiveness. Instead, I am questioning whether this discourse is helpful to modern Jewish identity.

Our responsibility is to protect and ensure the survival of the Jewish people, but our *mission* is to create a people guided by a tradition which challenges us to live lives of meaning and value and which can be a light both to ourselves and others. We need to fight anti-Semitism wherever it appears, but fighting anti-Semitism must not exhaust or define the purpose of Jewish life.

The reason that I hate talking about anti-Semitism is that I fear its impact on Jewish life. The more we talk about the uniqueness of anti-Semitism, the more we consecrate victimhood and aloneness as the defining experiences of Jewish life. That, however, is neither a prescription for long-term Jewish survival nor greatness. The principle lesson of Auschwitz is “Never Again.”

As in the past, I know that we will prevail against our enemies. The question is how to ensure that that victory does not undermine the essential Jewish responsibility to build a life of moral and spiritual greatness.

https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/i-hate-talking-about-anti-semitism/