

Do antisemites attack Jews as surrogates for God?

The Tabernacle of Testimony

God orders the Israelites in the desert to make a portable Tabernacle (Mishkan):

- And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. [Ex. 25:8].
- About 50x20 feet. Contains Tablets of the Law (“Ark of the Covenant” -- *Aron habrit*) and a golden menorah.
- The people generously donate gold, silver and copper, which is accounted for in detail in this portion. (*Pekudei* = accountings. No one is above accounting, even Moses!)
- When all is done, a cloud appears over the Mishkan, to indicate that the Divine Presence (*Shekhinah*) has come to dwell in it.
- The Mishkan became part of the Temple, later destroyed by the Babylonians.

Are Jews targeted as a substitute for God?

The portion begins:

Elleh pekudei ha-Mishkan, Mishkah ha-edut...

These are the accountings of the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle of Testimony. [Ex. 38:21]

The Midrash asks [Ex. R. 51:5]: Why is it called “the Tabernacle of Testimony”? Because it testifies to what Israel stands for. Gentiles cannot destroy God, so they try to destroy everything that testifies to God: The Temple and the Jews.

[If they could, the idolaters] would even scale the heavens [to wage war with God]. But since they are not able to touch You, they leave You alone and attack [the Jews].

Rabbi Hiyya ben Abba said: To what can the heathen be compared? To one who hated the king and sought to master him, but could not. So what

did he do? He went to the king's statue to destroy it, but held back, because he became afraid the king would kill him for it. He therefore tried to undermine the wall beneath it with an iron implement, thinking, "Once I overthrow the foundations, the statue will topple down." Similarly, the heathens come to provoke God, but, finding they cannot do so, so they attack Israel instead. This is what King David said in Psalm 2:

The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord. [Ps. 2:2].

Seeing that they cannot do that, they attack Israel, as the psalm continues:

Let us break their bonds and their cords [Ps. 2:3].

That is, let us uproot the Jews from the world, for the bonds and cords are the Torah and the commandments linking Israel to God.

So the Jews are a substitute for God, and the people try to destroy them as a way of destroying God.

Another midrash:

-When God offered to give the Torah to Israel, God offered the Torah not to Israel alone, but to all the nations.

-First God went to the descendents of Esau and said to them: "Will you accept the Torah?"

They responded, "What is written in it?"

God said to them, "You shall not murder" [Exodus 20:13]

They replied, "Master of the Universe, the essence of our father [Esau] is a murderer, as it is said of him... "By the sword you shall live" [Genesis 27:22]. We are not able to accept the Torah."

-God [then] went to the descendents of Ammon and Moab and said to them: "Will you accept the Torah?"

They said: "What is written in it?"

God replied: "You shall not commit adultery" [Exodus 20:13].

They said: "Master of the Universe, our very essence comes from sexual immorality, as it is said, 'The two daughters of Lot were pregnant from their father' [Genesis 19:36]. We are not able to accept the Torah."

-God [then] went to the descendents of Ishmael and said to them: "Will you accept the Torah?"

They said, "What is written in it?"

God answered, "You shall not steal" [Exodus 20:13]

They said: "Master of the Universe, our very essence is from stealing and robbery, as it is said, 'And [Ishmael] shall be a wild ass of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him' [Genesis 16:12]. We are not able to accept the Torah."

-There was no nation that God did not approach and ask if it wanted to accept the Torah.

-Afterwards, God came to Israel. They said to him:

Naaseh v'nishma: We will do and we will listen. [Exodus 24:7]

[Sifrei Deuteronomy 33:2; Pirkei d'Rabbi Elazar 41; Mekhilta d'Rebbe Yishmael, Yitro, Bahodesh 5]

So, the other nations asked first what is in the Torah, but only Israel accepted the Torah without knowing what was in it: “We will do what You ask *first*, and *then* we will listen to Your explanations”. They had trust in God and confidence in their ability to fulfill His commandments.

Isaiah:

I will appoint you [the Jews] to be a light unto the nations, that My salvation may extend to the end of the earth. [Is. 49:6]

So Jews are enjoined to spread their message.

Talmud:

Rabbi Hisda and Rabbah the son of Rabbi Huna both said:
What is [the meaning of the words] Mount Sinai? It is the mountain where hostility [*sin'ah*] descended towards idolaters. [Shabbat 89a]

In Hebrew, “Sinai” and “*sin'ah*” sound very close.

Hitler:

He hated the Jews for having given the world a conscience:

They refer to me as an uneducated barbarian... Yes we are barbarians. We want to be barbarians. It is an honored title to us... Providence has ordained that I should be the greatest liberator of humanity... Conscience is a Jewish invention. It is a blemish, like circumcision... I am freeing man from the restraints of... conscience and morality...

A plaque at Auschwitz quotes Hitler as saying:

I freed Germany from the stupid and degrading fallacies of conscience and morality... We will train young people before whom the whole world will tremble. I want young people capable of violence, imperious, relentless, cruel.

The “Hitler Youth” sang:

We have no need for Christian virtue.
Our leader is our savior.
The pope and rabbi shall be gone.
We shall be pagans once again.

Sigmund Freud:

He argued that Jews are hated not so much because they killed Jesus, but because they produced him:

Under the thin veneer of Christianity, [antisemites] have remained what their (pre-Christian) ancestors were: barbarically polytheistic. They have not yet overcome their grudge against the new religion which was forced upon them and they have projected it on the source from which Christianity came to them. The hatred of Judaism is at bottom a hatred for Christianity. [Freud, Moses and Monotheism, 1939]

Anne Frank:

Who has made us Jews different from all other people? Who has allowed us to suffer so terribly up until now?... God... Who knows, it might even be our religion, from which the world and all peoples learn good, and for that reason, and only that reason, that we suffer. We can never become just Netherlands, or just English or representatives of any country for that matter. We will always remain Jews. [Diary of Anne Frank, April 11, 1944]

Paul Johnson, Christian historian:

Certainly the world without the Jews would have been a radically different place... To them we owe the ideas of equality before the law...; of the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human person; of the individual and collective conscience...; of social responsibility; of peace as an abstract ideal, and of love as the foundation of justice; and of many other items which constitute the basic moral furniture of the human mind. [Paul Johnson, History of the Jews, 1987]

So some prefer spiritual darkness; object to morality; want to kill anyone who stands in their way, steal whatever they desire, assault any woman they like, indulge in idolatry and human sacrifice. But Jews said: This is wrong. There is only one God for all, invisible and perfect. People have rights and responsibilities. So they kill the messenger.

Objections

-Antisemitism predates the Torah, witness the story of Isaac, the first person born Jewish, suggesting envy and jealousy as the reason for antisemitism:

Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year an hundredfold; and the Lord blessed him. And the man became rich, and gained more and more, until he became very wealthy; For he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and great store of servants; and the Philistines envied him. For all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them up, and filled them with earth. And Abimelech said to Isaac, Go from us; for you are mightier than we. And Isaac departed from there, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and lived there. [Gen. 26:12-17]

-Christians, Muslims, etc., have adopted the values taught by Judaism, and are not targeted on account of them. Many non-

monotheists have similar values. If Jews were to disappear, the values may not.

-Why not simply ignore the Jews and their values, instead of killing them?

One answer: Because people can't cope with the guilt feelings after they do things they know are wrong.

This assumes "good" and "evil" are innate. Judaism insists they are learned. Torah does not command what people would do naturally.