

# שנאת חנם

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A Resource Guide for Rabbis & Others  
**on Antisemitism**

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on the fifth anniversary of the Pittsburgh  
synagogue shooting at the Tree of Life

OCTOBER 27, 2023

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שנאת חנם

## A Message from Ted Deutch | CEO, American Jewish Committee (AJC)

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For many, time stopped on October 27, 2018 when a man filled with hate and armed with an assault rifle entered Pittsburgh's Tree of Life – Or L'Simcha Congregation. Within minutes, eleven souls were lost and six people were wounded. As the news of this attack - the deadliest antisemitic attack in American history - spread, the Jewish world was shaken to its core.

Earlier this year, I had the honor of visiting the Tree of Life Synagogue and was overcome by the weight of the tragedy that unfolded there five years ago. The calendar hanging on the wall was still showing October 2018. The pain is still raw.

But I also experienced the extraordinary resilience of the Jewish community in Pittsburgh, which is committed to remembering and honoring those lost while also moving forward and creating something new on that now sacred site. I'm proud that AJC will be partnering with [Tree of Life](https://www.treeoflifepittsburgh.org) ([rememberrebuildrenew.org](https://www.treeoflifepittsburgh.org)), the new center that will serve as a moving memorial, museum, education center, and sanctuary for Pittsburgh, the United States, and the entire world.

We need this resilience because, sadly, the violence, hatred, and tragedy we witnessed in Pittsburgh was not an isolated incident. We have seen horrific attacks on Jewish communities unfold in Brussels, Toulouse, and across Europe, and we have witnessed the cancer of violent and deadly antisemitism come to American cities like Poway, Monsey, and Brooklyn. One only needs to log onto social media to see the extent to

which antisemitism is resurgent and has permeated our digital spaces.

Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Bazeh. All of Israel are responsible for one another. All Jews are responsible for one another.

This belief has motivated AJC to be a leader in the global fight against antisemitism for decades. When we saw antisemitism resurfacing in Europe more than two decades ago, we worked closely with the European Union and countries across the continent to create national strategies to combat antisemitism, appoint special envoys, and implement policies to protect and enhance Jewish life.

Our experience in Europe and around the world has made AJC an invaluable partner for the U.S. government as it crafted a whole-of-society U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism, a step for which AJC has long advocated and is now actively working to help implement.

As we remember and honor the lives lost in Pittsburgh and elsewhere to the scourge of antisemitism, let us recommit to working together to build a strong, proud, and resilient Jewish future free of hatred and violence. As spiritual leaders, your role is invaluable.

It is my hope this resource guide assists you in that task.

B'Shalom,



Ted Deutch  
CEO, American Jewish Committee (AJC)

## A Message from our friends at The Tree of Life Center: Remember, Rebuild, and Renew

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In the five years since the deadliest antisemitic attack in United States history, incidents of antisemitism and identity-based hate, often coupled with deadly violence, have continued to rise. As we remember today the lives of the 11 killed on October 27, 2018, we must recommit ourselves to our responsibility to respond to such hate and violence with love and action. Jewish tradition teaches us that while we may not complete the work, neither can we desist from it.

The story of the Tree of Life, however, is ultimately one of hope and resilience. Out of tragedy, **they are building something new** – a place that celebrates Jewish life and tradition, a place that remembers the wholeness of each victim, and a place that equips current and future generations in the work of repairing the world (*tikkun olam*) by building compassionate communities and uprooting antisemitism and hate in all its forms. On this now sacred ground, **the new space being built will allow us to REMEMBER, REBUILD AND RENEW.**

The leaders of this project believe that together we can uproot antisemitism. They believe that antisemitism is not a Jewish problem, it is an American problem and that by working to uproot antisemitism we will directly reduce all other forms of identity-based hate. That we cannot do this alone, nor should we do it alone. That communities that embrace “others” are stronger and healthier. That education must be coupled with action to make a lasting difference. That remembering our past is essential to building a better future. They are creating a space that will house a museum and will serve as a historic marker, a space that will contain a memorial, an education center and a *makom kodesh* – a safe and secure place for congregations and for Jewish life and learning.

As we remember the souls we lost on that awful day five years ago, let us take comfort in knowing that their memories will be honored in such a powerful way and in a way that will benefit us all.

# Worship Resources

## Tree of Life Memorial

Tree of Life,  
Revive our souls,  
Enrich our days,  
Entreating Your blessings.  
Oh, God of Peace,  
Fill our hearts with comfort,  
Letting Your Torah shine,  
In the fullness of our love.  
Faith in You, our God,  
Eternal Source of blessings.

Praying for healing  
In the depths of despair,  
Thanking God for the survivors,  
Thanking God for the first responders,  
Sorrow crushing our hearts,  
Bereaved beyond belief,  
United in our love,  
Returning to You in faith,  
God of Israel,  
Healer of generations.

Tree of Life,  
Redeemer of Israel,  
Enliven this moment with healing,  
Enliven this moment with hope.  
Oh, Rock of Israel,  
Forget not the Jews of Pittsburgh.  
Let Your love flow  
In the days ahead  
For justice and peace  
Everlasting.

### עץ חיים, פיטסבורג

עץ חיים  
צויתנו לבחר בחיים  
חדש את ימינו  
יחד לבבנו והאר עינינו בתו רתך  
ישא פניו אלינו בחן ובשלום  
מקור החיים והברכות.

פתחנו שפתותינו בתפלה  
י-ה, ממעמקים קראנו אליך  
טוב להודות עם הנצולים ועבור המצילים  
סומך ה' ל כל הנפלים וזוקף לכל הכפופים  
ביגון ובכאב התאחדנו  
ושבנו עדיך באמונה מתוך אהבתנו אחד לשנייה  
רפאנו ונרפא  
גמל עלינו כל טוב סלה.

עץ חיים  
צור ישראל וגואלו  
חוסה נא וחננו  
ישכנו בתוכנו צדקה ומשפט  
י-ה, שמר צאתנו ובואנו בפיטסבורג וברחבי תבל  
מעטה ועד עולם.

# The 11 Victims of the Tree of Life Massacre

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## Joyce Fienberg, 75

**Joyce Fienberg, 75**, grew up in Toronto and received her bachelor's degree in social psychology at the University of Toronto. She was married to the late Dr. Stephen Fienberg and the two moved to Pittsburgh in 1980. She lived just around the corner from the Tree of Life Synagogue and is remembered for her kindness and readiness to open her home to visitors after services. For over 25 years, she researched methods of teaching and learning in classrooms at the University of Pittsburgh's Learning Research and Development Center. In her work, she was known for her thoroughness and attention to detail. She was a highly trusted member of the community and took great pride in being Jewish and in developing her Jewish identity. Fienberg made the lives of those around her exponentially better through her overwhelming warmth and kindness. She leaves behind two sons, Howard and Anthony, and many loving grandchildren.

📄 <https://pittnews.com/article/138028/news/tree-of-life-victim-joyce-fienberg-remembered-as-deeply-caring/>

## Richard Gottfried, 65

**Richard Gottfried, 65**, loved to golf, run, and read. Together with his wife Margaret, known to all as Peg, he ran two dental offices, where he was known affectionately by his patients as Dr. Rich. He graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 1980, where he also received his dental certification. He had a passion for helping others and donated his time and dentistry skills to those in need, volunteering at free clinics and frequently helping immigrants and refugees with little or no means. He understood that need necessitates action and was always willing to put in extra hours to solve a problem or help a patient. Following his father's death, Gottfried started regularly attending services at New Light Congregation, later becoming its president. He was an avid wine enthusiast and runner who loved to participate in Pittsburgh's 10K events, completing 28 races before his untimely death.

📄 <https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2018/10/29/pittsburgh-synagogue-shooting-victim-richard-gottfried/>

## Rose Mallinger, 97

**Rose Mallinger, 97**, attended Tree of Life for more than 60 years, most often accompanied by her sons and grandsons. She was the oldest congregant killed on October 27, 2018. She was a true matriarch of the Synagogue and was always involved with planning services and events. The synagogue was more than just a house of worship, but also a place for her to be social and active with friends and family. Her heart and dedication stretched beyond the Synagogue walls; her sharp wit and wonderful sense of humor endeared her to everyone in the community. She was a role model for us all and we hope to maintain her example of strength, intelligence, and incredible resolve against adversity.

📄 <https://www.wesa.fm/post/tree-life-was-center-97-year-old-rose-mallinger-s-very-active-life#stream/0>

## Jerry Rabinowitz, 66

**Jerry Rabinowitz, 66**, was a beloved family doctor in Pittsburgh, heralded for his caring demeanor, infectious joy, and bright, bouncing bow ties. He previously served as the president of Dor Hadash, the Jewish Reconstructionist congregation housed in the basement of the Tree of Life Synagogue. When the shooting started, his first priority was to reach those who had been injured and provide immediate care. Rabinowitz earned his bachelor's and medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in the 1970s and moved to Pittsburgh around 1980. He was especially known for his compassionate care of those diagnosed with HIV, even before there was an effective treatment, and during a time where many in the country feared and misunderstood the virus. He had a tremendous belly laugh, firm moral compass, and was a champion to friends, family, and patients.

📄 <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/30/us/pittsburgh-dr-jerry-rabinowitz-funeral/index.html>

## Cecil Rosenthal, 59

**Cecil Rosenthal, 59**, was a regular attendee at the Tree of Life Synagogue. Outgoing and caring, he never shied away from asking after sick relatives. He made daily visits to the Squirrel Hill Flower Shop, showering employees with compliments and grins. Even though he suffered from Fragile X syndrome, a genetic disorder, he always stayed happy and involved in the community. He had been dubbed the “unofficial mayor of Squirrel Hill.” Cecil and his brother David, another victim of the shooting, lived together and were practically inseparable. They always greeted members of the congregation at the door, ready with warming smiles and firm embraces to put others at ease.

## David Rosenthal, 54

**David Rosenthal, 54**, was a regular attendee at the Tree of Life Synagogue. He was a quiet man and very emphatic about keeping things clean. David loved anything related to the police, and especially enjoyed toying with his scanner radio. He also worked at a number of cleaning jobs and was incredibly fastidious in his personal life. Cecil and David were known for their zest and embrace for life, their huge hearts, and beautiful message of acceptance. The brothers were role models for everyone entering through the Synagogue doors.

📄 <https://www.jta.org/2018/10/30/united-states/pittsburgh-remembers-shooting-victims-david-cecil-rosentha-thoughtful-kind>

## Bernice Simon, 84

**Bernice Simon, 84**, was a regular member at the Tree of Life Synagogue, along with her husband, Sylvan, also a victim of the shooting. The two were married 62 years earlier, in the same chapel at Tree of Life where they later lost their lives. Bernice worked as a nurse after attending Montefiore Hospital School of Nursing. Known to her grandchildren as Bobie, she is remembered for singing songs like “A Bushel and a Peck” and “You Are My Sunshine,” as well as for her delicious cranberry orange bread. She would make regular trips to Costco with her daughter, Michelle, and would always be sure to try each and every food sample they had on offer. She and her husband were known to do everything together and are examples of how to live vibrantly through devotion and immense kindness.

## Sylvan Simon, 86

**Sylvan Simon, 86**, was married to Bernice in the Tree of Life Synagogue in 1956. Sylvan was a member of the L'Chaim club, enjoying a shot of Jim Beam after Shabbat services, as he only "drank American." Sylvan was a retired accountant and served in the United States Military. He maintained a deep love for the muscle cars of old, though his wife might reprimand him for driving too fast. He and Bernice loved going to the Pittsburgh Symphony together and enjoyed many inside jokes.

📄 <https://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2018/10/28/Bernice-and-Sylvan-Simon-a-married-couple-from-Wilkinsburg-synagogue-shooting-victims-squirrel-hill/stories/201810280231>

## Daniel Stein, 71

**Daniel Stein, 71**, grew up in Homestead, Pennsylvania, where he learned to help run the family business: the Stein Hotel. Always a friendly and warm presence, he previously worked as a plumbing salesman, substitute teacher and as a funeral home driver. More recently, Stein became a grandfather to seven-month-old, Henri. He could light up a room with his infectious personality and dry sense of humor. As an active and loved member of the community, he attended services each Saturday - always ready with a smile and one of his famous wisecracks. Stein served as the president of the New Light Congregation, which shared space with the Tree of Life Synagogue. He also served as a member of its board of directors, and the president of the men's club. As a fundraiser for the community, he was known for his raffles and annual sale of entertainment books. Stein loved to volunteer his time anyway he could and was always ready to lend a helping hand to those in need, willing to do anything for anyone.

📄 <https://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2018/10/28/Daniel-Stein-Tree-of-Life-Squirrel-Hill/stories/201810280222>

## Melvin Wax, 88

**Melvin Wax, 88**, was a passionate member of the Tree of Life Synagogue who attended services 3-4 times a week and never let anything get in his way. He was a devoted grandfather to his grandson, Matthew, and a baseball fanatic, rooting loud and proud for his Pittsburgh Pirates. He loved to make people laugh and would always draw a large audience to deliver a punchline. Every week he looked forward to spending time with his daughter, Jodi. Wax served in the US Army after World War II, stationed in Germany, and through the Korean War. After his military service, he worked as an accountant, putting his incredibly sharp memory and way with numbers to good use. Wax was a generous man, built from grit and adversity, and was always the first to step up and serve.

📄 <https://www.jta.org/2018/10/31/united-states/pittsburgh-shooting-victim-melvin-wax-remembered-devoted-grandfather-selfless-community-member>

## Irving Younger, 69

**Irving Younger, 69**, was most often the first face greeting congregants outside of Tree of Life. He was an incredible spiritual and physical presence, known for his selfless generosity and strong desire to lift others up. The son of two Holocaust survivors, Younger ran a real estate business for many years, sharing his incredible success with Sherry, his late wife of 30 years. He was always quick to greet and befriend any stranger, but was especially devoted to his children, Jordanna and Jared, and doted lovingly on his grandson, Jaden Buss.

📄 <https://archive.triblive.com/local/pittsburgh-allegheeny/irving-younger-killed-at-tree-of-life-up-in-heaven-greeting-people-at-the-gates/>

# אל מלא רחמים

God full of mercy, who dwells on high, establish proper rest upon the wings of the Divine Presence, on the levels of the holy and pure ones who shine like the splendor of the firmament, for the souls of the Kedoshim of Pittsburgh,

**Joyce Fienberg**  
**Richard Gottfried**  
**Rose Mallinger**  
**Jerry Rabinowitz**  
**Cecil Rosenthal**  
**David Rosenthal**  
**Bernice Simon**  
**Sylvan Simon**  
**Dan Stein**  
**Mel Wax**  
**Irv Younger**

murdered al Kiddush Hashem, because we pray for the elevation of their souls. And remember for us their sacrifice and let their merit stand for us and for all of Israel. Let the earth not cover their blood and let there not be a place sufficient for their cries. Master of mercy, cover them in the cover of Your wings forever and bind their souls with the binding of life. God is their inheritance. May their rest be in Gan Eden and let them rest in peace upon their places of repose, and let them stand for their fate in the end of days. And let us say: Amen.




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“El Malei,” Rabbi Daniel Yolcut

## Renew Our Days as of Old

By Rabbi Noam E. Marans

From the depths we cry out to You<sup>1</sup>, dear God, for You are with us in our straits.<sup>2</sup>

*Hear the blood of our brothers and sisters as they shout out to us, to You, from the ground.*<sup>3</sup>

A year has passed, but the pain subsists. We are not the same.

*Dear Pittsburgh, we are with you in your sorrow. We are responsible one for the other.*<sup>4</sup>

Comfort the mourners who grieve the loss of their loved ones, their friends, those who unite to establish synagogues for prayer and those who enter them to pray.<sup>5</sup>

*Joyce Fienberg, Richard Gottfried, Rose Mallinger, Jerry Rabinowitz, Cecil Rosenthal, David Rosenthal. May our memory of them be for a blessing.*

Bernice Simon, Sylvan Simon, Daniel Stein, Melvin Wax, Irving Younger. May our memory of them be for a blessing.

*God, Creator, brighten us with the light of the First Day and dispel this darkness.*<sup>6</sup>

Renew within us our Divine image of the Sixth Day, which fashioned and governs our humanity.<sup>7</sup>

*Teach us to banish evil and know good, our distinction from the beasts, acquired in the Garden of Eden.*<sup>8</sup>

Care for the wounded of body and spirit. Enable them, us, to heal and regenerate as Adam and Eve did in the face of unbearable loss.<sup>9</sup>

*Restore the American Jewish innocence lost, that America could be different, that America will be different. Mend our fractured nation.*

Bless those who did not stand idly by while their neighbor's blood was shed, who ran toward and not away.<sup>10</sup>

*Bless those who showed up for Shabbat, now and then. Their presence allows the good of the many to prevail over the evil of the few.*

Yea, though we walked through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil, for Thou art with us.<sup>11</sup>

*Renew our days as of old.*<sup>12</sup>

*Rabbi Noam E. Marans is the American Jewish Committee's director of interreligious and intergroup relations.*

1. *Psalms* 130:1

2. *Psalms* 91:15

3. *Genesis* 4:10

4. *Shevuot* 39b

5. Shabbat prayer book

6. *Genesis* 1:2-4

7. *Genesis* 1:27

8. *Genesis* 2-3

9. *Genesis* 4:24

10. *Leviticus* 19:16

11. *Psalms* 23:4

12. *Lamentations* 5:21

## #ShowUpForShabbat Prayer

By Rabbi Noam E. Marans  
2018

Compassionate God, God who comforts the mourning and visits the sick, God of justice and of mercy, Protector of Abraham and Sarah, and Proclaimer of Liberty, grant us strength at this awful hour.

*As we face the venomous hate that extinguishes lives, we are filled with anger, with shock, and with despair.*

We mourn the murder of precious human beings, our brothers and sisters who were gathered for prayer, for tradition, and for community.

*We mourn with those who loved the victims, and we offer our love, as You love Your people Israel and all the world. We pray for the wounded of body and soul. O God, please grant them healing, physical and spiritual.*

We grieve for the loss of American Jewish innocence, as the most basic of American values, our freedom of religion, has been threatened. Once more, a sanctuary has been violated, and people in prayer have been attacked.

*Jews were murdered, but all America has been assaulted.*

We will never forget the solidarity of our fellow human beings, from our American brothers and sisters, and from faith communities in all four corners of the world, who have come together to offer their support. Their words and their presence have shown us that good will prevail over evil.

*Dear God, we are in pain. Heal us. Give us the power to heal ourselves. We are determined to persevere, and yea, though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we fear no evil, for You are with us.*

God, give Your people strength. God, bless Your people with peace. And let us say: Amen.

## Antisemitism, Intolerance, Baseless Hatred, and Reconciliation

# Traditional Sources

ויברא אלהים | את-האדם בצלמו בצלם אלהים ברא אתו זכר ונקבה  
ברא אתם

God created humanity in God's image, in the image of God were they created,  
male and female were they created.

Genesis 1:26-27

קול דמי אחיך צעקים אלי מן-האדמה

The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground.

Genesis 4:10

ואברכה מברכיך ומקללך אאר ונברכו בך כל משפחת האדמה

I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.  
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Genesis 12:3

ויאמר אל עמו הנה בני ישראל רב ועצום ממנו: הבה נתחכמה לו פן ירבה  
והיה כי תקראנה מלחמה ונוסף גם הוא על שנאינו ונלחם בנו ועלה מן  
הארץ

See, the Children of Israel are too many for us.  
Let us deal wisely with them, lest they increase.

Exodus 1:9-10

ולפני עור לא תתן מכשל

You shall not put a stumbling block before the blind.

Leviticus 19:14

## לא תעמוד על דם רעך

You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor.

 *Leviticus 19:16*

לא תשנא את אחיך בלבבך הוכח תוכיח את עמיתך ולא תשא עליו חטא  
לא תקם ולא תטר את בני עמך  
ואהבת לרעך כמוך אני ה'

You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall rebuke your neighbor and not bear sin because of him.

You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

 *Leviticus 19:17-18*

וכי יגור אתך גר בארצכם לא תונו אתו: כאזרח מכם יהיה לכם הגר הגר  
אתכם ואהבת לו כמוך כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים

When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

 *Leviticus 19:33-34*

## וחי אחיך עמך

Let your sibling live beside you.

 *Leviticus 25:36*

כי מראש צרים אראנו ומגבעות אשורנו הן עם לבדד ישכן ובגוים לא יתחשב

As I see them from the mountain tops, Gaze on them from the heights, There is a people that dwells apart, Not reckoned among the nations.

 *Leviticus 19:33-34*

לא תתעב אדמי כי אחיך הוא לא תתעב מצרי כי גר היית בארצו

You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother: you shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were a stranger in his land.

 Deuteronomy 23:7

העדותי בכם היום את השמים ואת הארץ החיים והמות נתתי לפניך  
הברכה והקללה ובחרת בחיים למען תחיה אתה וזרעך

I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your children may live.

 Deuteronomy 30:19

הנה מה טוב ומה נעים שבת אחים גם יחד

How good and pleasant it is for siblings to dwell together.

 Psalms 133:1

וכסילים ישנאו דעת

Fools hate knowledge.

 Proverbs 1:22

ויאמר המן למלך אחשוורוש ישנו עם אחד מפזר ומפרד בין העמים בכל  
מדינות מלכותך ודתיהם שנות מכל עם ואת דתי המלך אינם עשים ולמלך  
אין שוה לחניחם

Haman then said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people, scattered and dispersed among the other peoples in all the provinces of your realm, whose laws are different from those of any other people and who do not obey the king's laws; and it is not in Your Majesty's interest to tolerate them."

📖 *Esther 3:8*

הוא היה אומר אם אין אני לי מי לי וכשאני לעצמי מה אני ואם לא עכשיו  
אימתי

Hillel used to say: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am for myself alone, what am I? And if not now, when?"

📖 *Pirke Avot 1:14*

שמואל הקטן אומר (משלי כד) בנפול אויביך אל תשמח ובכשלו אל יגל לבך  
פן יראה הי' ורע בעיניו והשיב מעליו אפו

Shmuel Hakatan says: "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when your enemy stumbles; lest God see it, and be displeased, and God turn away God's wrath from your enemy."

📖 *Mishna, Pirke Avot 4:19*

המאבד נפש אחת...כאלו אבד עולם מלא והמקים נפש אחת...כאלו קים  
עולם מלא

Whosoever destroys one soul, it is as though he had destroyed the entire world.  
And whosoever saves a life, it is as though he had saved the entire world.

📖 *Sanhedrin 37a*

## שד זה מתהפך לכמה גונים

This demon can change himself into many guises.

📖 *Yoma 75a*

## דרכו של שד נכנס לאדם וכופה אותו

The way of the demon is to enter a person and possess him.

📖 *Sifre Haazinu*

## מום שבך אל תאמר לחברך

Do not reproach a person with a fault which is also yours.

📖 *Bava Metziah 59b*

## בכל העולם כולו נתפס על כל העולם כולו

If a person can prevent the whole world from committing sins, but does not, he is punished for the sins of the whole world.

📖 *Shabbat 54b*

## איזהו גבור העושה שונאו אוהבו

Who is mighty? The one who makes an enemy into a friend.

📖 *Avot de Rabbi Natan*

## צדיקים בגוים יש להם חלק בעולם הבא

The righteous among the gentiles have a share in the world to come.

📖 *Tosefta, Sanhedrin*

האומות באות להתגרות עם הקדוש ברוך הוא ואין עושין מה עושין  
מתגרין בישראל

The nations wish to vex God, but cannot, so they vex Israel.

📖 *Exodus Rabbah 51*

ישראל אמרה ריבונו של העולם עד מתי יקומו נגדנו והוא אמר שהם קמים  
לא נגדכם בלבד אלא נגדי

Israel said: "Master of the Universe! For how long will they rise up to destroy us?  
He replied: they rise not only against you, but also against me!"

📖 *Midrash Tanhuma, Shoftim*

מי ששונא בני אדם כאילו הוא שונא את מי שדבר והעולם קיים

Whosoever hates people, it is as if he hates The One who spoke  
and brought the world into being!

📖 *Pesikta Zutrei*

אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא מה אני דורש ממך אלא לאהוב ולכבד אחרים

This is what the Holy One said: "My children, what do I ask of you?  
I ask no more than that you love one another and honor one another."

📖 *Seder Rabbah Eliyahu 26*

שונא את חברו כאילו שפך דמים

One who hates his neighbor, it is as if he has shed blood!

 *Derekh Eretz*

זה דומה לחכמים לפני המלך האחד מכסה את ראשו ואחד עומד בגלוי  
ראש הם נבדלים זה מזה באשר להפגין כבוד למלך הם מסכימים שכיבוד  
המלך הוא הדבר הנכון

This is to be compared to two wise men who appear before a king, one covers his head and the other removes his hat. Despite the fact that they differ as to how to show honor to the king, they agree that honoring the king is the correct thing.

 *Rabbi Yitzhak Arama, Akedat Yitzhak, 12:90*

הענין הנהדר בכל העולם שאדם למחול את חברו

The most beautiful thing that we can do is to forgive a wrong.

 *Eleazer ben Judah of Worms*

# & Sample Sermons & Divrei Torah

## A Sermon for the 5th Anniversary of the Shootings in Pittsburgh at Tree of Life

By Rabbi David Levy

A six-year-old boy in Nazi Germany is forced to use the local Jewish cemetery as a playground. At school, in the park, in the city neighborhood he calls home, he is harassed simply for being a Jew. The cemetery is his only safe space, the one place the bullies are too afraid to follow him. In the embrace of ancestors long past, he plays alone. Soon he is sent to a Jewish boy's school in Caputh, a place he remembers as paradise, a place where he became a proud Jew and a proud Zionist. It was also a place where he found non-Jewish allies, teachers and townspeople who showed him care and protection. Long after he left that place, long after he made his way to a successful and long life in America, he would pass these lessons on to his children and grandchildren: the importance of allies and pride.

Fast forward to 1973, his son was raised as a proud and active Jew, unafraid to express his identity, never feeling targeted for it until he entered a new Middle School that included students from neighborhoods different from his own. Walking home from school one afternoon, he was ambushed by three older boys who taunted him with antisemitic slurs and pushed him into the dirt. He fought back and made his way home, but hid from his parents what had happened, fearing the repercussions of a report to the principal. Instead, the next day he told his best friend Alex, an Egyptian Christian who also happened to be one of the biggest children in his grade. For the next few days, he and Alex walked home together, and Alex made it clear that he had his friend's back.

Finally, in recent years, the son had become a Rabbi. Now one of the children of his congregation, a 13-year-old studying for his Bar Mitzvah, came to him with another story of antisemitism. At the bus stop one morning, a

couple of kids had thrown some pennies at him and then said, "Come on Jew, aren't you going to pick them up? Don't you love the money?" Asked how he responded, he said that before he could say anything, his friends called them out and got them to back off. Then, he said, when he got to school, he went right to the principal's office to report the incident. When the Rabbi said that was very courageous of you, the boy demurred. He said it wasn't about courage, but pride. He wasn't going to let anyone get away with putting down his Judaism.

Three vignettes, from the life of my father, myself and one of my congregants that all share something in common with this anniversary commemoration, the power of pride and community in facing the challenge of antisemitism. From the 1930's where these were lessons learned, to the 1970's where they were embraced, but not fully integrated, to only a few years ago where they were fully incorporated into a young boy's sense of place; pride and community remain two of our most powerful weapons against the corrosive effects of this oldest of hatreds.

That is not to say that we must ignore the imperative to react as a Jewish community powerfully and directly to incidents of antisemitism. We must speak out and we must demand that our government and political leaders confront it head-on, whether it comes from the left, from the right or from religious extremist elements. We must remind them, and other public figures, that words have power and rhetoric has consequences. The use of "Jew down" by a public figure is not a trivial matter to be simply dismissed. But we cannot take it so far as to make rising antisemitism so central to our psyche that

we either shrink back in fear, live in denial, or make this battle our core reason for being Jewish. As Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, United States Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism and one of the world's leading scholars on antisemitism notes, "What is necessary for Jews to survive and flourish as a people is neither dark pessimism nor cockeyed optimism, but realism."<sup>1</sup> This is where pride and community come in and why this Shabbat is so important.

Tonight is a Shabbat devoted to gathering in remembrance of those whose lives were lost in the shootings that took place at Tree of Life in Pittsburgh five years ago. But it is equally devoted to remembering and recommitting to what brought them to that sanctuary in the first place. They came to that sanctuary to express their Jewish connections to each other, to their congregation, and to their G-d. They came to be part of a worship tradition that connects us back through the generations of our ancestors and serves as a foundation for the generations to come. They came because being Jewish was something they proudly expressed.

Ambassador Lipstadt, in her book, Antisemitism: Here and Now, shares a story that feels keenly tied to this moment in time and the importance of our Jewish pride. She writes:

*"...during a recent Jewish holiday, as I entered my synagogue along with two friends—a five-year-old girl and her mother. The mom smiled at the security guard stationed at the door, turned to her daughter, and said, "Let's say hi and thank you to the guard for keeping us safe." A look of puzzlement swept across my little friend's face. From the many books we have read together, she knows about "safe" places and "dangerous" places, and in her mind a synagogue did not fall under the latter category. It's a joyful place where she runs around with the other kids in the playground, attends a children's service that is filled with singing, and then wends her way into the main sanctuary, where she and her playmates help conclude the services and receive lollipops from the rabbi. Why would she need someone to help keep her safe in such a place?"<sup>2</sup>*

Why indeed. We all know why, and we are deeply thankful for those who watch over us as we join in worship and learning during these troubling times. However, it is critical that we maintain and enhance our pride through Jewish identification, celebration, worship, learning and

public gathering. In Lipstadt's words, we must "balance the "oy" with the "joy"." On this Shabbat of Remembrance, we pray that any awareness our children have "of the dangers that may threaten (their) well-being at the synagogue... will never overshadow the joys (they) find there."

Beyond pride, this Shabbat is also about community. Five years ago, following the murder of eleven innocent Jews at prayer at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue, millions of people of all faiths rallied around AJC's #ShowUpForShabbat initiative. They packed synagogues in what became the largest-ever expression of solidarity with the American Jewish community. This synagogue was among those who welcomed so many guests from across our community into this sanctuary. So many of you, our members, our friends, our neighbors, and our community leaders joined us here and we are deeply grateful for the role you played in that historic moment of solidarity.

Following the Tree of Life shootings, AJC called on the whole of society "to stand up proudly and loudly for the values of decency, civility, mutual respect, bipartisanship and unity"<sup>3</sup> that are critical for fighting this hatred that has infected our society. Each of us - Jew, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, or Muslim, Gay, or Straight, Black, White, Latino, or Asian - each of us in the rainbow of diversity that is the American ideal must recognize that when anyone of us is targeted, all of us are targeted.

It is this whole of society approach to antisemitism that is at the heart of the recently unveiled U.S. National Strategy for Countering Antisemitism which AJC CEO Ted Deutch has said sends "a clear, unequivocal message that antisemitism is a problem that affects all of society, not just Jews." It is an effort that he stressed must include all of us here this evening. Highlighted the role that our congregations can play in bringing this historic plan to fruition, Deutch shared that "...this plan (the U.S. National Strategy) not only invites us, but requires us to embrace our Rabbis and our congregants who understand how unprecedented this moment is, and to work together as collaboratively as we possibly can to help address (it's action items)."

And so, let this Shabbat be not just a gathering of comfort and remembrance. Let this Shabbat be a call to action. Beyond responding to antisemitism with vigilance and security, let us answer fear with pride and confront hate with societal unity and

action. Even as we mourn those who were lost, let us look forward to building a society and a world in which the oldest of hatreds finds no acceptance.

*“Let us avoid letting this “longest hatred” become the linchpin of (our) identity. Our tradition in all its manifestations—religious, secular, intellectual, communal, artistic, and so much more—is far*

*too valuable to be... replaced with a singular concentration on the fight against hatred.”<sup>4</sup>*

Joined together on this Shabbat with friends, neighbors, community leaders and allies, let all who are gathered here in this sanctuary demonstrate a unity and shared destiny that says: We do not fear, rather we stand together, and we rise.

*Rabbi David Levy is Regional Director of AJC New Jersey.*

1. Lipstadt, Deborah E., *Antisemitism* (p. 241). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.
2. Lipstadt, Deborah E., *Antisemitism* (pp. 241-242).
3. Harris, David, *After Pittsburgh, We Need A Coalition of Conscience*, *The New York Jewish Week*, October 30, 2018
4. Lipstadt, Deborah E., *Antisemitism* (p. 242)

## Antisemitism in America: The Loss of American Jewish Innocence?

By Rabbi Noam E. Marans  
Rosh Hashanah 5780/2019  
Morristown (NJ) Jewish Center-Beit Yisrael

Dinah Haramati was my freshman Hebrew language teacher at the legendary Yeshivah of Flatbush High School. Mrs. Haramati gave me many gifts, but the one that has lasted the longest is the treasure trove that she transmitted of brief Hebrew sayings, aphorisms, ethical teachings, kernels of wisdom and advice from the Jewish tradition over two millennia. Mrs. Haramati would dramatically write the Hebrew date and name of the weekly Torah portion on the blackboard with chalk – blackboards and chalk, the good old days – and beneath the date she would write the Hebrew saying of the day. By the end of the academic year there were more than 150 of these Hebrew sayings. And we had to commit all 150 to memory for the final at the end of the year. Thank you, Dinah Haramati, I remember every single one! One of my favorites was on the longer side – most were no more than five words in length – and this one was ten words: *Ayno domeh shoneh pirko me’ah p’amim l’shoneh pirko me’ah v’achat* (Babylonian Talmud, Chagigah 9B). Like all foreign language idioms, it gets a little lost in translation, but here it is in English: It is not the same studying a text 100 times as it is studying it 101 times. Or, more literarily, more idiomatically: Keep looking – you’ll find something new you never saw before.

Every year on Rosh Hashanah we read Genesis, Chapter 22 from the Torah - the story of the

Akedah, Abraham’s attempted sacrifice of his son Isaac at God’s behest. Every year we reread this frightful drama – a father attempting to sacrifice his own son in fulfillment of a divine command, a test by God. We reread the story every year, but we do not experience the story the same way each year. When we are younger, we might read it as someone’s child, and when we are older, we might read it as someone’s parent. Sometimes we notice something in the story that we never noticed before. That happens to me a lot, even though I have read the story hundreds of times. Sometimes something is going on in the world and we are given a new perspective on this story, a story we know probably as well as any story in our Torah.

This year, I read the story in the context of a year in which American Jews had to comprehend the horrifying, cold-blooded murder of 11 Jews in a Pittsburgh synagogue on a Shabbat morning; the murder of one Jew in a Poway, San Diego synagogue six months later, a tragedy that would have been even more deadly had the perpetrator’s gun not jammed; a year that included antisemitic incidents at a level that surpasses our experience in this country during at least the last 60 years, my entire life.

Abraham is willing to sacrifice his son, Isaac, as God

has commanded. Abraham and Isaac have a brief conversation as they get closer to their mission. It seems like Isaac is aware of what is going on, but his understanding of the situation is never made fully explicit. He does not resist. He appears willing to martyr himself. The angel intervenes at the last minute and rescinds God's command. Abraham has passed the test of faith.

Not a further word is spoken about this lifethreatening and life-changing incident. There is no debrief. There is no conversation between father and son. There is no emotion. The trauma is repressed.

Almost immediately after the story ends, a new story begins. We are told that Sarah, wife of Abraham, mother of Isaac, has died. The rabbis of the midrash can't resist and amplify the Torah's story. It must be cause and effect. Sarah heard that her husband was willing to sacrifice her son, the rabbis say, and she dies of fright. Sarah cannot process the trauma and she passes from the scene.

The Torah tells us that Abraham prepares to bury his wife, Sarah, in the city of Hebron, where she died. Abraham needs to purchase a burial plot for his family from the local population, the Hittites. For the first time since Abraham attempted the sacrifice of his son, Isaac, just a few verses before, we finally hear Abraham say something. The Torah records Abraham's first post-trauma spoken words. He turns to the local Hittite leadership and begins his request for the acquisition of a family burial site with the following introduction: "Ger v'toshav anokhi imakhem," "I am a resident and an alien (stranger?) among you." (Genesis 23:4)

A resident alien? What does Abraham mean? On the one hand he is saying that he lives in this new place, the land of Canaan, the future Land of Israel, the land God promised to him and his descendants. He is a resident. On the other hand, he is not certain about his status with the local people. He is an alien. Abraham doesn't know whether he should feel at home or feel unwelcome. Is he a resident or an alien?

It is quite surprising that Abraham has this loss of confidence. He is God's guy, the one God has entrusted with the sacred task of propagating what we have come to know as the Jewish people. We are already told that he is a very successful man, that he is rich in cattle, silver and gold. But somehow, he is not sure whether he fits in. Something has shattered his confidence. Abraham

has experienced trauma, the attempted sacrifice of his son as God requested, and the death of his wife, Sarah. And Abraham is rattled. He can't fully process the events. He is no longer sure if he is a resident or an alien. We might wonder whether Abraham is suffering from what we moderns call PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder.

This is exactly the kind of trauma we are experiencing as a collective American Jewish community. Our confidence as resident, as permanent, has been threatened by an American minority – threatening and violent – who want to make us as alien, as temporary. We are wondering whether America will live up to the narrative we have bestowed upon it – as the best home for the Jewish people among our thousands of years of diaspora experiences. Here we could make it. Here we did make it.

I know many rabbis in Pittsburgh. I have spoken with several of them during this past year as they and their community have navigated this horror. I cannot imagine what these High Holy Days will be like in Pittsburgh this year, as Jews gather in synagogues there in very large numbers for the first time since the memorial services for their fallen nearly one year ago. Yet I do know that, certainly for Pittsburgh Jews, who have suffered unbearable familial and communal loss, but also for all American Jews in a different, yet parallel way, we enter the new Jewish year with a palpable realization that a great deal has changed since we gathered for the High Holy Days a year ago. It is not just Pittsburgh and Poway. Beyond those tragedies inside synagogues on Shabbat mornings, it has been a year of a wider epidemic of violence against Jews in this country, most notably the ongoing attacks on visibly Jewish Orthodox Jews in Brooklyn, NY, home to more than a half million Jews, and dramatic increases in antisemitic incidents nationally. New York City, the city with the largest Jewish population in the world has experienced a 63% increase in antisemitic hate crimes during the past year. We have had to adjust to entering fortified synagogues and other Jewish communal institutions which are beginning to look like European synagogues that have been secured for decades.

We are dealing with antisemitism from multiple sources: there is the extreme right of Charlottesville and its chants of "Jews will not replace us," of Poway and Pittsburgh which, at the moment, is the most dangerous antisemitism in the U.S. As you undoubtedly know, the Pittsburgh massacre

was the deadliest day of antisemitism in American history. There is the extreme left, which has perfected anti-Zionism and anti-Israelism as a new form of antisemitism, and pushes BDS – boycotts of, divestment from and sanctions against Israel – and has brought its campaign of Israel demonization to the college campuses where our young Jews are put on the defensive. There is also antisemitism in America from extremists in the name of Islam. Each of these and other manifestations need targeted responses.

But we dare not let that be the only narrative of American Jewish life. Yes, the spike in violence is a permanent stain on the American Jewish experience, long heralded – correctly – as the best of the Jewish diaspora experiences. Jews are regarded more warmly in the United States than any other faith adherents, according to yet another recent survey by the Pew Research Center, consistent with previous findings. Americans respect Jews. Depending on your age and where you grew up, some version of the following is true: Our American Jewish experience has been much better than the American Jewish experience of our parents and grandparents. The experience of our parents and grandparents – and for some here, our own experiences – of restrictive covenants denying Jews access to certain neighborhoods, glass ceilings that prevented promotions of Jews in corporate America, and university quotas that were once barriers to Jewish advancement – have receded or disappeared. But this positive narrative coexists with a new reality: The marginalization of antisemitism to the political and social fringe has ebbed in force, and a dormant and violent beast, hugely boosted by the power of social media, has awakened.

It is up to American Jews and their fellow citizens to keep antisemitism from being renormalized during this tipping point moment. There is a lot at stake for all of us. Antisemitism endangers not only Jews but the societies in which we live. Thankfully, this American society is not prepared to be passive in the face of antisemitism and other forms of hate.

What can we do now? Here are five possibilities to consider.

First, we must defeat nativist and antiimmigrant sentiment in the U.S. and the political opportunism that manipulates this issue for electoral gain. America as a nation of immigrants is not just a slogan. It is a historical reality and central to America's success as a nation inspired by "E Pluribus Unum" (Out of Many, One). Nativism

cyclically rears its head in American history with deadly consequences, as in the El Paso, Texas, massacre. For Jews, American immigrant history has had its highs, notably millions of Jews fleeing Eastern Europe from 1881 to 1914, including my grandparents, and its lows, as when the government sent the passengers of the ship St. Louis back to Europe, where 254 of them were murdered in the Holocaust. America can reform its defunct immigration system while securing its borders and sustaining its strong tradition of welcoming refugees.

Second: Last year, within hours of the Tree of Life synagogue massacre, the American Jewish Committee, AJC, where I work when I am not here with you on the High Holy Days, established on social media a rallying cry, #ShowUpForShabbat, that moved untold numbers of Jews and others of all and no faiths to attend synagogue services across the planet on the following weekend, including here at MJCBY (Morristown Jewish Center, Beit Yisrael). This "We are all Jews" response reaffirmed that this moment is not remotely akin to the nadir of civilization reached in Germany in the 1930s, when antisemitism, built upon centuries of religiously motivated anti-Judaism, was mandated by the government and encouraged by civil society.

Let's make #ShowUpForShabbat a tradition. Jews who may not be weekly attendees should fill the pews on Oct. 25-26, to commemorate the Pittsburgh tragedy and the global response of solidarity. Synagogues should open their doors to their neighbors that Friday evening and Saturday morning and allow the goodness of the overwhelming majority to prevail over the evil of the few. MJCBY will be participating in the 2019 iteration of #ShowUpForShabbat. Individual Jews should invite their non-Jewish friends to join them. Faith groups should encourage their adherents to participate. This will be a collective opportunity to say: We will not be cowered. We will not be made afraid. In addition to showing solidarity, #ShowUpForShabbat can be educational, demystifying Judaism and the synagogue and contributing to a more literate society in which the faith of the other is better understood.

Third, although antisemitism is a primary existential threat to the Jewish people, hate of the other in all its manifestations must be eradicated. Hatred of Jews may not always be first on the list of haters' priorities, but it is always in their inventory. The white supremacist terrorists of Pittsburgh and

Poway justified their murder of Jews by linking antisemitism with other forms of hate, implicating Jews as those who allegedly facilitate the nonwhite immigrant “invasion” of America. The American Jewish response to that should be the redoubling of our efforts in coalition building, including but not limited to Muslim-Jewish, Latino-Jewish and black-Jewish initiatives.

Fourth, our government must have the tools needed to defeat hate, including antisemitism, when it erupts into violence. Preemptive strategies have been enhanced with the establishment of New York City’s Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes, which was sorely needed after a dramatic increase in hate crimes in the city during the past year. Other cities of concern should follow suit. Additionally, concerned citizens are calling upon all Americans to advocate for the NO HATE Act, which will improve the FBI’s ability to track and respond to hate crimes. When federal authorities were given the tools to defeat the threat to our country after 9/11, they were successful in keeping us safe. They need parallel and powerful tools now.

Fifth, and arguably most important: If we are to survive and flourish as Jews, combatting antisemitism, as serious as that task is, cannot be our only focus as responsible Jewish Americans. We have to teach our children and grandchildren

that there is much more to being Jewish than anti-antisemitism. As the renowned expert on the Holocaust, Emory University professor Deborah Lipstadt, cautioned in her recent book on antisemitism, we have to balance the OY with the JOY. No one aspires to be a part of a persecuted people. Our children and grandchildren will only want to be Jewish if it brings joy to their lives, gives meaning to their existence, ennobles them, and creates concentric circles of family which they can’t resist in joining. We must ask ourselves, individually and collectively, whether we can do a better job in that mission.

In short, on many levels, especially this last piece – conveying a positive message of Jewish belonging – we are not passive actors. There is something, there are many things, we can do at this tipping point moment in American Jewish history. A lot of this is in our hands.

The Ashkenazi High Holy Day liturgy asks, “Who shall live and who shall die?” Sadly, we cannot avoid reflecting on this question as we sit in a synagogue and contemplate the events of the last year. But the Sephardic liturgy asserts more hopefully, “End a year and its curses. ... Begin a year and its blessings.” May it be so. We can make the hope for those blessings a reality.

*Rabbi Noam E. Marans is AJC’s Director of Interreligious and Intergroup Relations.*

Adapted from his column which originally appeared in RNS: <https://religionnews.com/2019/10/07/four-ways-for-all-americans-to-keep-anti-semitism-from-becoming-the-new-normal/>

## The Massacre of Jews in Pittsburgh: A #ShowUpForShabbat Reflection

By Rabbi Noam E. Marans

Now, as American Jews, we are confronting the reality that we dreaded and feared—it could happen here. We are mourning the loss of American Jewish innocence.

This Shabbat cannot be like any other Shabbat. It is the Shabbat of the week of shivah for our eleven brothers and sisters who were brutally murdered as they joined together in a synagogue to pray, to celebrate our Jewish tradition, to be together with our people. They were murdered because

they were Jews, at the hand of a man infected with antisemitic, racist, and xenophobic hatred. They were murdered because they were part of a Jewish civilization that welcomes the stranger and cares for those in need.

Above all, they were human beings, with families. They were, to the bereaved, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, grandparents and great-grandparents, brothers and sisters. These families mourn their losses in a very personal way—a

mourning that goes far beyond and much deeper than our communal pain. The Jews of Pittsburgh and their neighbors feel this massacre as an assault on their home, on their people. By all accounts, the victims were the good, the upstanding people, the backbone of their synagogue. They were the people who welcomed you at the front door, the joyful participants and the able leaders.

And we, the wider Jewish community, wherever we are on this Shabbat, from Jerusalem to New York, from Paris to Miami, from Mumbai to LA, wherever Jews are gathering in large numbers, in diverse synagogues and traditions, we feel the pain, anger, and loss of a people that is inextricably linked one to another. For we know that kol Yisrael areivim, that all Jews are responsible for one another, for each other's welfare, for our wellbeing.

It is a Shabbat of sadness and mourning. But it must also be a Shabbat of defiance and continuity, a Shabbat of gratitude and thanksgiving. Synagogues all over the world will be more filled, rather than less filled. We will not run away. We will not cower. We will not allow the hate of a few to drive out the love of the many. We have been blessed by the many beyond the Jewish community who have joined us in our sorrow and defiance, not only by their presence in our synagogues this Shabbat, but by their statements and vigils of solidarity, declaring unequivocally: We are all Jews. Faith leaders, civic officials, and tens of millions of Americans have made it clear: An attack on one faith is an attack on all faiths. An attack on one American is an attack on all Americans.

It is a Shabbat in which we feel diminished, but it is also a Shabbat of appreciation. We salute and praise the first responders who engaged the evil without hesitation despite the real threat to their own lives. The first police officers on the scene and the many others who followed fearlessly demonstrated the values of elevated citizenship, of E Pluribus Unum, out of many—one. We thank them for the lives they saved and for the justice they pursue. We ask God to heal them of their wounds, to body and soul.

Our Torah portion this week, Hayyei Sarah, speaks of death, of continuity, of consolation, and it is instructive for us as a people and as individuals at this moment of crisis in American Jewish life. There is no massacre in the Torah reading, but there is insecurity. Abraham, the first of our Patriarchs, the father of the Jewish people, is old. We learn

of the death of his beloved Sarah, the first of our Matriarchs, the mother of the Jewish people. Abraham is bereaved; he is vulnerable.

Abraham is already a wealthy and influential man, whom the Torah describes as a person who has made his mark on the wider society, in commerce and defense, and, no doubt, with his ethical monotheism. And yet, the trauma of the death of a loved one makes him unsure, uncertain of his place in the wider society. He says to the Hittites, the local majority, "Ger v'toshav anokhi eemakhem." "I am both a resident and a stranger in your midst." (Genesis 23:4) At a moment of terrible personal crisis, Abraham seems to lose his footing, not sure of his place in the wider world.

Many American Jews experienced the trauma of last Shabbat on multiple levels. Of course, we experienced the tragedy on the most human level, lives cut down, families permanently altered. But we also experienced it through our history of Jewish vulnerability. Could it happen here? What does the spike in antisemitism mean? We witnessed the intermittent violent antisemitic incidents and loss of Jewish life over recent years. We witnessed the massacres in churches, the torching of mosques, the damaging of synagogues, the rise in hate crimes, particularly against Muslims and Jews. We dreaded and feared the inevitable and it has now happened—the most deadly antisemitic carnage in our magnificent American Jewish history—and it scares us. Of course, we realize that this is the act of a madman, of a crazed bigot, but we also sense that something is happening, that the darker side of America, a side that had been subdued, is surfacing, sometimes with very violent consequences.

There was a lot at stake when Abraham seemed insecure. The future of the nascent Jewish people hung in the balance. And he regained his poise, buried Sarah and turned his focus to assuring the future of the Jewish people, to find a bride for Isaac so that the lineage he began with his beloved wife might continue.

We are far from being ready to regain our confidence. The wound is too fresh. The families are still in the midst of palpable trauma with multiple shivah homes and unbearable grief. But today we take a first step as a wider Jewish community, as a Jewish people, as Americans. We are aided immeasurably by the support of our fellow Americans of all faiths, races and ethnicities

who have reached out to us as individuals and as a people with solidarity and comfort. We are grateful and buoyed by their support. Americans of goodwill have come together at a time of great need. If we stay together, love will prevail over hate, good will prevail over evil.

The journey for Abraham was a long one. He sends his servant, whom the midrash identifies as Eliezer, back to the old country to find a wife for Isaac. Her name is Rebecca. The narrative concludes with a beautiful verse, a rare moment of recorded patriarchal emotion. “And Isaac was consoled for [the loss of] his mother.” (24:67)

The bereaved families and community of Pittsburgh have only just begun to process the horrific that is so personal for them. We have only just begun to process the impact of this trauma for American

Jewry. We are a long way from comfort and consolation.

Today we focus on praying for the health of the injured. May they be granted a *refuah sheleimah*, *refuat hanefesh urfuat haguf*, a speedy and complete recovery of body and soul.

We remember the 11 martyred Jews of Pittsburgh and mention each of them by name: Richard Gottfried, 65; Joyce Fienberg, 75; Rose Mallinger, 97; Jerry Rabinowitz, 66; Cecil Rosenthal, 59; David Rosenthal, 54; Bernice Simon, 84; Sylvan Simon, 86; Daniel Stein, 71; Melvin Wax, 88; and Irving Younger, 69.

Yehi zikhram barukh.  
May their memory be for a blessing.

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<https://thriveglobal.com/stories/the-massacre-of-jews-in-pittsburgh-a-showupforshabbat-reflection/>

## “Life and death are in the power of the tongue” (Proverbs 18:21)

By Rabbi David Rosen

In May 2019, AJC co-sponsored a conference on Jesus and the Pharisees at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. We did so because of our concern regarding the persistent use of the name “Pharisee” in a pejorative manner, primarily by religious Christians and even by some leaders of major Christian denominations.

The Pharisees were one of the major Jewish groups during the late Second Temple period. Jesus of Nazareth’s interaction with them was complex; some scholars have even suggested that he himself was part of their community. Saul of Tarsus—who came to be known to Christendom as Saint Paul — was a Jew who openly declared himself to have been a Pharisee; and the leader of the pharisaic community at the time, Rabbi Gamliel, is portrayed in the New Testament as if not sympathetic, certainly not hostile to Jesus and his followers.

However, the New Testament also describes fraught interactions between Jesus and Pharisees. In these

scenes, the Pharisees are presented as rigid and finicky about Jewish religious Law, not always spiritually sincere and even hypocritical. In fact, some of these accusations were made by some of the Pharisees themselves against others within their own community.

The Pharisaic community came to be identified both in Jewish tradition and by many Christians as synonymous with the rabbis of the Talmud, and thus the term Pharisee came to be used by Christians as a synonym for Jew.

Thus, just as the name “Jew” was often used in a negative way in the past by gentiles particularly in the Christian world (but also in the Muslim world in different times and places), the name and image of the Pharisee became a tool of antisemitic discourse.

With the revolution in Catholic teaching towards Jews and Judaism brought about by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council in the mid-nineteen

sixties, a greater sensitivity in this regard developed. (A parallel development took place among many Protestant denominations.) Vatican documents such as the Guidelines on Nostra Aetate (1974) and the Notes on how to present Jews and Judaism (1985) precisely cautioned against such pejorative usage and negative generalizations.

However, the effect of this “new theology” and its attendant cautions was limited. While in parts of the Christian world, the impact of the Shoah led to a greater awareness of the evil of antisemitism, elsewhere attitudes towards Jews and Judaism were not relevant to the daily life of Christians, let alone high on their list of priorities. Moreover, insidious attitudes that prevailed over almost two thousand years are not eliminated overnight.

In recent times, the impact of the Shoah and of these warnings seems to have waned and we have witnessed something of a resurgence of the pejorative use of the term Pharisee in sermons and homilies, even by most senior figures in the Church. This was the reason that we felt it was of the utmost importance to make scholarship regarding the identity, beliefs, and practices of the Pharisees more widely known, to show how the term came to be used in a negative manner, and to warn of the danger of the use of the name in that way.

There was no intention on our part to suggest that such pejorative use was or is motivated by antisemitic intent. On the contrary, recent generalizations using the term Pharisee have often been made by those whose love of the Jewish people is well-known.

Cardinal Blaise Cupich of Chicago recently referred to the danger of prejudicial language while reflecting on the tragedy of the Shoah. He recalled the observations of William Dodd, a historian from the University of Chicago who was chosen by President Roosevelt to be America’s first ambassador to Nazi Germany.

Initially hopeful and encouraged by the spirit of the “New Germany” that emerged from the ashes of the First World War, Dodd’s excitement quickly turned to fear as Hitler’s rise to power led to the increasing persecution of Jews and others. Dodd telegraphed the State Department firsthand accounts of attacks on Jews, the censorship of the press, and the enactment of new laws that

restricted the rights of the Jewish people and other minorities. His superiors, however, treated his communiques with indifference and his reports were considered too sensational to be reliable.

Dodd later noted that Hitler’s rise to power and the policies that led to the Holocaust developed through stages. First came the bigoted language targeting a minority. Initially widely dismissed both within German society and abroad as “only words” and marginal, the use of such language became increasingly widespread, credible and even “respectable.” The next stage involved targeting the “other” as a scapegoat for the grievances people were told they should have, especially as they reflected on their experience of defeat in the First World War. Hatred leading to the dehumanization of “the other” became a political tool for national cohesion and empowerment. Dehumanization, in turn, led to the intent and action of extermination.

The philosopher George Santayana once remarked that ignorance of the past condemns us to repeat it. While the world today is significantly different from that of Germany in the 1930s, there are dangerous echoes of such bigoted language and prejudicial stereotyping in our contemporary society that must alarm every person of conscience.

Almost always we discover that the perpetrators of ethnic or religious violence have been exposed to and have promoted bigoted speech and attitudes. It is accordingly of the utmost importance to educate religious leaders about that dangers of such language. It is no less important to ensure that we do not let the use of prejudicial language go by uncontested.

Any language that demeans human dignity, poses a threat to all of us. For words might not kill in themselves, but they can certainly inspire violence. As it is written in the book of Proverbs 18:21, “life and death are in the power of the tongue.”

## A Global Perspective on Antisemitism

By Rabbi Serena Eisenberg

Charlottesville. Pittsburgh. Poway. These names resonate as some of the bloodiest demonstrations of racist and antisemitic violence in the recent past. But even before neo-Nazis marched in Virginia, or one of their cohorts opened fire at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life congregation, a toxic culture of coarsened civil discourse was escalating in our country. As a former Hillel director who worked on some of the United States' most prestigious college campuses, in the past decades I have witnessed firsthand the emergence of a form of anti-Zionism that often shaded into antisemitism, and sometimes led to acts of hate speech, vandalism, and provocations to violence. The tragedy and terror of Pittsburgh did not happen in a vacuum.

Here in the United States, we took our safety for granted and took comfort in the idea that antisemitism was a relic of another century and other continents. But denial now is dangerous. As we sift through the shock and grief of a resurgence in antisemitism, this first anniversary of the Pittsburgh shooting is a milestone, a reminder to move forward with action. One meaningful response, and surely the theme of many high holiday sermons, exhorts us to find joy and meaning in Judaism: to celebrate Jewish holidays and culture, to educate our children, and to share the treasures of our tradition with our neighbors. The AJC initiative to #ShowUpForShabbat is a powerful challenge to reclaim our synagogues as sanctuaries. These are personal and local steps each one of us can and must do.

But we must also broaden our networks of responsibility and influence to address bigotry and hatred nationally and globally. Our European cousins have borne the brunt of the resurgence in this oldest of hatreds. Germany and France have seen a disturbing spike in street harassment of Jews, and in some cases murder, from the 2015 rampage at Paris' kosher supermarket to this month's attack on the Halle shul. Meanwhile, the British Labour Party, in the thrall to its antisemitic chief Jeremy Corbyn, could soon take power in London. Neo-Nazis, among them the murderer in Halle, cast Jews as foreign agents of cosmopolitanism and decadence. Jews, in a

revised "Elders of Zion" conspiracy theory, are said to deprive so-called real Europeans of their right to decide their political fate. Meanwhile, some on the far left liken Jews to Nazis because of our community's support for the state of Israel. Spurious BDS campaigns have caricatured Israel as an aggressor in its conflict with the Palestinians, and have fomented hatred against Jews as representatives of the state of Israel. The confluence of these two streams of antisemitism has created a tide of fear and terror for European Jews. Antisemitism exists on various points of the political spectrum, and an integrated strategy for fighting it must take account of this reality.

Our organization has pioneered exactly such an approach. AJC brings something unique to the conversation; ours is one of the few communal organizations with a worldwide imprint, with offices in the United States as well as in Europe and Israel. AJC's edge in addressing this large and complex issue of contemporary antisemitism rests on our unique bridge-building efforts with diplomats, elected officials, and religious and civic leaders. These alliances lead to concrete action to combat antisemitism and other forms of bigotry. A few examples: more than 160 members of Congress have signed up for the Joint Bipartisan Taskforce for Combating Antisemitism that was launched at AJC's behest. AJC has also led the campaign to stop the BDS movement in its tracks, on the congressional level, in statehouses, and on our nation's college campuses. On the worldwide level, we have encouraged foreign governments to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Association's definition of antisemitism. And we are changing the conversation about Israel through Project Interchange trips for elected officials, diplomats, and civil society leaders from various countries.

There is far too much at stake for us to be complacent. It is time for a local AND global outlook, to utilize our influence and resources to advance strategic battles against antisemitism by building friendships and alliances for mutual understanding.

*Rabbi Serena Eisenberg is the Director of Regional Engagement for AJC and a seasoned Jewish community professional.*

# Perspectives

## American Jews Shouldn't Be Afraid to Be Jewish

👤 Ted Deutch 📰 Newsweek 📅 February 13, 2023

🔗 <https://www.ajc.org/news/ajc-ceo-ted-deutch-op-ed-american-jews-shouldnt-be-afraid-to-be-jewish>

Do you go through a metal detector before entering your house of worship? Are you worried about being verbally or physically assaulted if you wear meaningful jewelry

that your grandmother gave you? Likely, your answer is no. But for an alarming number of American Jews, this is what life is like today in America.

## Europe's Lessons for the Struggle Against Anti-Semitism

👤 Simone Rodan-Benzaquen 📰 The Atlantic 📅 March 2, 2020

🔗 <https://www.ajc.org/news/europes-lessons-for-the-struggle-against-antisemitism>

On October 28, 2018, I was at home in Paris, a blissful bubble, feeding my one-month-old baby girl, when I got the news of the massacre of Jewish worshippers at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. One thought repeated in my head: *That's it. A haven for Jews in the diaspora doesn't*

*exist anymore.* I had feared for years that this moment would eventually arise, when the cancer of anti-Semitism would spread to liberal democracies around the world, including to the one place that had always seemed safe to me: the United States of America.

## To Fight Antisemitism, You Need To Clearly Define It

👤 Andy Baker 📰 The Forward 📅 August 3, 2021

🔗 <https://www.ajc.org/news/to-fight-antisemitism-you-need-to-clearly-define-it>

With the appointment of Professor Deborah Lipstadt as the new Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism attention will focus on the Biden Administration's plans to confront the persistent scourge of antisemitism which has even increased in the wake of the COVID pandemic and the recent conflict. She will have an enormous

task taking on the global reach of this age-old hatred, even as others will need to address the challenge of antisemitism here in the United States.

One of the most important and useful tools in the global fight is the Working Definition of Antisemitism.

## 10 Tough Questions on Antisemitism Explained

AJC November 8, 2022

<https://ajc.org/ToughAntisemitismQuestions>

From deadly attacks like the 2018 Tree of Life synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the 2019 Chabad Center shooting in Poway, California, to the 2022 hostage situation at a synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, and the normalization in mainstream popular culture punctuated by the spread of antisemitic rhetoric by rapper

Kanye West, basketball star Kyrie Irving, and comedian Dave Chappelle, hatred of the Jews continues to multiply in the United States.

But what is antisemitism, why has it become so common now, and why has prejudice against Jews emerged so forcefully?

# Appendices

## RESOURCES FOR RABBIS AND CONGREGATIONS

# Utilizing the U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism

## A JEWISH COMMUNITY GUIDE TO COUNTERING ANTISEMITISM

**A special note for Rabbis:** During this season of reflection and as we approach the five year anniversary of the tragedy at the Tree of Life Synagogue — the deadliest attack against Jews on American soil — antisemitism will undoubtedly be top of mind. The U.S. National Strategy offers hope and a path forward. American Jews should be aware:

- While other nations have action plans to address antisemitism, this is the first ever comprehensive American strategy to counter it.
- Representatives from more than 40 government agencies — from Department of Justice to Department of Agriculture — met and continue to meet every other week to determine and follow through on dozens of bold and innovative ideas to address antisemitism through their own mandates. This creativity within our government and long-term commitment to address a problem is virtually unprecedented.
- The U.S. National Strategy, unlike other nations' action plans, does not just guide the work of the government, but mobilizes all sectors of American society — from celebrities to governors, from law enforcement to the media — to understand, respond to, and prevent antisemitism.

**The National Strategy stands on four pillars, each of which presents opportunities for Jewish communities.** *Please note that the suggestions offered below are not exhaustive. There is always more that can be done.*

### PILLAR 1

Increase awareness and understanding of antisemitism, including its threat to America, and broaden appreciation of Jewish American heritage.

The Strategy encourages all faith leaders to educate their communities about both antisemitism and Jewish heritage, history, and culture, as well as the core American principle that people of all faiths have equal rights to religious liberty.

□ **Provide trainings on understanding antisemitism:** AJC can partner with you by offering educational trainings on recognizing, responding to, and preventing antisemitism. These trainings will enable your congregation, membership, and/or partners to speak out when antisemitism and other forms of hate occur in your communities. To inquire, contact [trainings@ajc.org](mailto:trainings@ajc.org).

- **Ensure your members understand**

**antisemitism:** [AJC's Translate Hate glossary](#)<sup>1</sup> helps identify different sources of antisemitism and expose antisemitic tropes, words, and symbols that often hide in plain sight. [AJC's State of Antisemitism in America 2022 report](#)<sup>2</sup> details data about how American Jews perceive and experience antisemitism.

- **Enlist partners.** Work with non-Jewish faith leaders in your area to bring American Jewish Committee (AJC) trainers to educate their communities about both antisemitism and Jewish heritage, history, and culture, giving them the tools and inspiration to speak up when they

hear speech that is antisemitic or witness antisemitic discrimination.

□ **Plan for Jewish American Heritage Month**, which occurs in May. AJC offers many resources specifically designed to celebrate [Jewish American Heritage Month](#)<sup>3</sup>, including videos, podcasts, and information on Jewish contributions to our country. AJC can also help plan Jewish

community events to recognize this month.

□ **Acknowledge International Holocaust Remembrance Day**, designated by the UN to take place annually on January 27. Rabbis and Jewish communal leaders should issue [public statements](#)<sup>4</sup>, encourage Holocaust education, and hold community events reaffirming the fundamental guiding lesson of the Holocaust: never again.

## PILLAR 2

Improve safety and security for Jewish communities

This October will mark the fifth anniversary of the tragedy at the Tree of Life Synagogue, the deadliest antisemitic event on American soil. For the first anniversary, AJC created a [Resource Guide for Rabbis and Others](#)<sup>5</sup>. This Guide will be updated and expanded for the fifth anniversary, and we will share that, other resources, and plans for commemoration with you as they are finalized.

The National Strategy cites [AJC's State of Antisemitism in America 2022 report](#)<sup>6</sup> that says 63% of American Jews believe law enforcement is effective in responding to the Jewish community's needs, a sharp drop from 81% in 2019. The Strategy calls on Jewish institutions to build stronger ties with law enforcement and community-based violence prevention programs, to discuss antisemitism and hate crimes.

□ **Facilitate coordination with law enforcement:** Rabbis can ask their mayors and/or local law enforcement to establish a liaison to serve as a central coordinator for relationships with the local Jewish community or interfaith associations to be a central point of contact on security needs.

□ **Convene coalitions:** Coalitions are crucial to fighting hate of any form. Jewish communal organizations and synagogues can play a leading role as convenors of partners from local businesses, organizations, civil society

leaders, interfaith and intergroup, and other stakeholders to discuss antisemitism and hate crimes in your communities.

The Strategy calls on local and community leaders, law enforcement, and Jewish communities to collaborate on efforts to improve hate crime incident reporting, increase trust, and raise awareness about what constitutes a hate crime. As the National Strategy outlines, "Through these relationships, Jewish communities can avail themselves of federal training, technical assistance, and resources to bolster their security. Federal resources only reach as far as local actors' ability to utilize them."

□ **Improve hate crime reporting:** You and your congregants can work with AJC to engage in advocacy with local governments and law enforcement to intensify efforts to improve state and national hate crime reporting.

□ **Improve security to protect minority communities:** In Fiscal Year 2023, the Department of Homeland Security's Nonprofit Security Grant Program will provide \$305 million to train staff and protect minority-affiliated institutions and houses of worship. Raise awareness of these grants with eligible partners and urge participation.

## PILLAR 3

Reverse the normalization of antisemitism and counter antisemitic discrimination

A majority of American Jews (69%) noticed antisemitism online in 2022, according to AJC's State of Antisemitism in America 2022 report. Similarly, of the 36% of U.S. adults that saw antisemitism in the past year, 82% saw it online or on social media.

□ **Report antisemitism online:** We can all play a role in reducing online hate. Don't be silent when you see an instance of antisemitism or other forms of hatred on social media. Report it to the platform directly; AJC's [Translate Hate](#)<sup>7</sup> includes instructions.

The Strategy notes that in schools and on college campuses, Jewish students, educators, and administrators have been derided, ostracized, and sometimes discriminated against because of their actual or perceived views on Israel. All students, educators, and administrators should feel safe and free from violence, harassment and intimidation.

□ **Meet with leadership:** Synagogues and organizations can bring together Jewish educators, teachers, and parents to meet with school administrators or superintendents to raise awareness of antisemitism and ensure that there are clear and transparent mechanisms for students to report hate incidents.

□ **Engage Jewish youth:** The Strategy calls on Jewish student groups in K-12 schools and colleges to be a part of developing materials for their schools on how to identify and combat antisemitism.

□ **Utilize AJC resources:** The resources in AJC's ever-growing [Campus Library](#)<sup>8</sup> can help Jewish students and parents be the best advocates for themselves and the Jewish people in the classroom and beyond.

## PILLAR 4

Build cross-community solidarity and collective action to counter hate

91% of American adults say that antisemitism is a problem for everyone, it affects society as a whole. [In this video](#)<sup>9</sup>, American Jews and allies reflect on the importance of everyone taking a stand against anti-Jewish hate, noting that "if it happens to one of us, it happens to all of us."

Since 73% of Americans who know someone who is Jewish say antisemitism is a problem in the U.S. today, compared with 59% who do not know anyone who is Jewish, building personal connections between Jews and Americans of other faiths is critical and needs to begin early.

□ **Improve education:** The importance of education in the fight against hatred cannot be overstated. For coalition partners, learning about Jewish history and the societal problem of antisemitism can help develop a deeper understanding of Jews, their values, their fears, and the need for non-Jewish bystanders to not stay quiet in the face of Jewish attacks. AJC has [developed resources](#)<sup>10</sup> to help everyone better understand the

Jewish religion, culture, and practices.

□ **Build personal connections:** Rabbis can consider tapping into local interfaith clergy councils that facilitate interfaith programming and fuel community activism. The Strategy encourages youth groups from a diverse range of religious communities to develop and incorporate multi-faith social activities, service events, and educational programming into their curricula.

The National Strategy calls on Jewish institutions to build strong ties to states and localities to collaborate with nongovernmental partners to support solidarity-building.

□ **Celebrate each other's cultures:** Seek out opportunities to engage with partners within diverse communities during Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, and so on; and ask them to help the Jewish community celebrate [Jewish American Heritage Month](#)<sup>11</sup>.

□ **Raise awareness of important holidays:**

Jewish leaders play an important role in proactively creating awareness of religious cultures, practices, and needed accommodations of religious observances. This is especially critical for ensuring that official calendars for public schools and elections consider the major holidays of religious groups of all faith communities.

□ **Make interfaith and intergroup connections:**

Your nearest [AJC Regional Office](#)<sup>12</sup> can help you connect with exemplary cross-community partnerships, such as AJC's Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council (MJAC) and Latino Jewish Leadership Council, and coalitions, such as AJC's Hindu-Jewish coalitions, Black-Jewish coalitions, and Christian-Jewish coalitions.

**AJC's Task Force to Implement the U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism**<sup>13</sup>

is excited to work with all stakeholders, including Rabbis, congregations, and other Jewish communal partners, in this important work.

**If you have questions, need further information, or wish to partner more closely with AJC and the work of our Task Force, please reach out to your nearest [AJC Regional Office](#)<sup>14</sup> or contact AJC's Rabbinic Outreach Team: Rabbi David Levy at [levyd@ajc.org](mailto:levyd@ajc.org) or Karla Bonné at [bonnek@ajc.org](mailto:bonnek@ajc.org).**

**American Jewish Committee (AJC)** is the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people. With headquarters in New York, 25 offices across the United States, 14 overseas posts, as well as partnerships with 38 Jewish community organizations worldwide, AJC's mission is to enhance the well-being of the Jewish people and Israel, and to advance human rights and democratic values in the United States and around the world.

Following the historic unveiling of the U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism by the White House, AJC CEO Ted Deutch announced the creation of the AJC Task Force to Implement the U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism. AJC's Task Force is designed to ensure the execution of the National Strategy, which includes dozens of AJC's recommendations closely resembling **AJC's Call to Action Against Antisemitism in America**, in a meaningful and timely manner. For more information on AJC's Task Force visit [AJC.org/NationalStrategyNews](https://ajc.org/NationalStrategyNews).

1. [AJC.org/TranslateHateGlossary](https://ajc.org/TranslateHateGlossary)
2. [AJC.org/AntisemitismReport2022](https://ajc.org/AntisemitismReport2022)
3. [AJC.org/JewishAmericanHeritageMonth](https://ajc.org/JewishAmericanHeritageMonth)
4. [AJC.org/statement/InternationalHolocaustRemembranceDay](https://ajc.org/statement/InternationalHolocaustRemembranceDay)
5. [AJC.org/RabbinicAntisemitismResource](https://ajc.org/RabbinicAntisemitismResource)
6. [AJC.org/AntisemitismReport2022](https://ajc.org/AntisemitismReport2022)
7. [AJC.org/TranslateHate](https://ajc.org/TranslateHate)
8. [AJC.org/CampusLibrary](https://ajc.org/CampusLibrary)
9. [AJC.org/WhereTheresHope](https://ajc.org/WhereTheresHope)
10. [AJC.org/Culture](https://ajc.org/Culture)
11. [AJC.org/JewishAmericanHeritageMonth](https://ajc.org/JewishAmericanHeritageMonth)
12. [AJC.org/regionaloffices](https://ajc.org/regionaloffices)
13. [AJC.org/NationalStrategyNews](https://ajc.org/NationalStrategyNews)
14. [AJC.org/regionaloffices](https://ajc.org/regionaloffices)

# Defining Antisemitism

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The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism is a crucial first step in addressing the horrific rise in antisemitism, especially in Europe. The Working Definition is a clear and compact description of antisemitism in its various forms, including Holocaust denial, prejudices against Jews, and the denial of Israel's right to exist. The Definition sends a message that governments understand the threat, which is the obvious first step in addressing it. AJC was involved in the original drafting of the definition 14 years ago and continues to urge European governments to adopt it. To date, 15 nations have adopted the definition and the EU, along with the UN's Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion, have called for all member states, respectively, to adopt it.\*

## Working Definition of Antisemitism:

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**“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”**

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\*<https://www.ajc.org/workingdefinition>

**To guide IHRA in its work, the following examples may serve as illustrations:**

Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for “why things go wrong.” It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.

Contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

- Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
- Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.
- Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
- Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).
- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.

- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.
- Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

**Antisemitic acts are criminal** when they are so defined by law (for example, denial of the Holocaust or distribution of antisemitic materials in some countries).

**Criminal acts are antisemitic** when the targets of attacks, whether they are people or property – such as buildings, schools, places of worship and cemeteries – are selected because they are, or are perceived to be, Jewish or linked to Jews.

**Antisemitic discrimination** is the denial to Jews of opportunities or services available to others and is illegal in many countries.

# 5 Key Takeaways from AJC's State of Antisemitism in America Report 2022

For too many American Jews, being Jewish no longer feels as safe as it once did. And the younger those American Jews are, the more they experience that threat firsthand.

An American Jewish Committee (AJC) study released this week sheds light on that heartbreaking reality and more. How affected are American Jews by rising antisemitism? Does the general public understand the weight they carry?

Based on parallel surveys of American Jews and the U.S. general public on their perceptions and experiences of antisemitism in the U.S., [AJC's State of Antisemitism in America Report 2022](#)<sup>1</sup> is the most comprehensive of its kind.

Here are five key takeaways from the report.

## 1. More Jews feel less secure in America.

Over four in ten (41%) of American Jews feel their status is less secure than it was a year ago. That's up 10 percentage points from 31% who reported feeling less secure in 2021. That sense of security has eroded, they say, primarily due in large part to the rise in antisemitic attacks, crimes, and violence; and how acceptable antisemitism and racism have become.

To prevent antisemitism from becoming normalized, Americans must speak out against antisemitic tropes and conspiracy theories, which affect all of us.

"One best practice in fighting antisemitism is when leaders of other communities do the speaking. People are more likely to listen to those they know, those they trust, and those who are like them," said Holly Huffnagle, AJC's U.S. Director of Combating Antisemitism. "This is why we need white evangelical leaders to disavow white supremacy and antisemitic conspiracy

theories like QAnon. We need Black leaders to condemn Louis Farrakhan's antisemitism. We need Muslim leaders to condemn antisemitism or antisemitic tropes when they appear in their own communities and Latino leaders to speak out against antisemitism in their communities."

Nine in 10 American Jews (89%) think antisemitism is a problem in the U.S., and eight in 10 (82%) say it has increased in the past five years.

[The hostage situation inside a synagogue in Colleyville](#)<sup>2</sup>, Texas in January 2022 also has raised anxiety levels. For American Jews who had heard something or a lot about Jews being taken hostage in Colleyville, the majority said it made them feel a great deal (18%) or a fair amount (33%) less safe as a Jewish person in the United States, and over a third (36%) said it made them feel a little less safe.

The feelings of insecurity are even greater among young Jewish adults who heard about the crisis, in which a gunman held three congregants and a rabbi hostage for 11 hours during Shabbat until they escaped. Among young Jewish adults ages 18 to 29 who heard a lot or some about the Colleyville hostage situation, 67% felt a great deal or a fair amount less safe at the time, compared with 47% of those 30 and older who felt the same.

Likewise, one in five American Jewish respondents (19%) said, because of antisemitism, they feel unsafe (somewhat or very) when attending synagogues, Jewish day schools, community centers, or any of the Jewish institutions with which they are affiliated. Meanwhile, confidence in law enforcement also seems to be on a downward trend. 63% of American Jewish respondents say law enforcement is effective in responding to the security needs of Jews. Among Orthodox Jews surveyed, 65% say law

enforcement is effective in addressing their needs, a sharp decrease from 81% in 2021.

## 2. American Jews are proud, but altering behavior out of fear.

The lingering presence of antisemitism has altered how some American Jews conduct their day-to-day lives and even whether they publicly identify as Jewish this past year. This includes the 23% of Jewish adults who said they have avoided publicly wearing, carrying, or displaying things that might help people identify them as Jewish; and the 16% who said they have avoided certain places, events, or situations because they are Jewish, out of concerns for their safety or comfort.

Likewise, one in five American Jewish respondents (19%) said, because of antisemitism, they feel unsafe (somewhat or very) when attending synagogues, Jewish day schools, community centers, or any of the Jewish institutions with which they are affiliated.

One in four (26%) American Jews reported being personally targeted by antisemitism in 2022 – a number that hasn't declined since the survey question was first asked in 2019. While the number has not climbed, the fact that the threat has not waned is still troubling.

"When we first did this survey in 2019, the results were surprising for many people. They were still much higher in Europe, but we didn't think it would be even this high in the U.S.," Huffnagle said. "To see the consistency over the years confirms our trust in the data, but it's troubling to see."

Overall, four in ten (38%) American Jews reported changing their behavior at least once out of fear of antisemitism.

Meanwhile, half of American Jewish institutions have boosted security measures in the last two years. But it is equally important to note the majority of Jews have not changed their behavior and still publicly identify as Jewish.

"While the survey is about American Jewish experiences with antisemitism, we also don't want the focus to solely be on the negative

and empower the antisemites," Huffnagle said. "While nine in 10 say antisemitism is a problem, the majority are still going to synagogue and feel safe. They're not taking off their Magen Davids or kippot. We need to point out that any Jew who is changing their behavior is one too many. But for the majority, it remains possible to be proudly Jewish. At the end of the day, it's about community resilience."

## 3. Antisemitism online and on social media is a continuing threat. But young American Jews experience it differently.

While one in eight American Jews (13%) were personally targeted by an [antisemitic remark or post online](#)<sup>3</sup> or through social media in the past 12 months, among young American Jews between the ages of 18 and 29, roughly one in five (19%) say they were. (Antisemitism "experienced online" includes Jewish adults who were personally targeted and/or those who had seen it.)

In addition, almost two-thirds of American Jews (67%) have seen antisemitism online or on social media in the past year.

And 84% of Jewish adults under age 30 say they have seen this hateful content in the past year. Taken together with those who were personally targeted, fully 85% of young American Jews – those ages 18 to 29 – were the target of antisemitism online or have seen it online at least once in the past 12 months (compared with 64% of Jews age 30 or older).

For one in four of these young American Jews (26%), the antisemitism experienced online made them feel physically threatened, compared to 14% of their older counterparts.

"Growing up in an era of social media and with a cultural focus on intersectional identity, young Jews increasingly feel alienated and, at times attacked, online and in their social circles," noted Meggie Wyschogrod Fredman, Senior Director of the Alexander Young Leadership Department. Huffnagle agreed and added, "Many people do not know who Jews are. They see Jews solely as a religious group and antisemitism solely as a religious hatred. This is why we must ensure Jewish diversity and inclusion, alongside addressing antisemitism, is foundational within DEI to

help prevent incidents of anti-Jewish bias in the workplace. After all, stereotypes about Jews have even prevented them from being included within DEI spaces. This must change.” Read AJC’s answers to ten tough questions about antisemitism.

Almost 3 in 10 (27%) of all American Jewish respondents avoided posting content online that would identify you as a Jew or reveal your views on Jewish issues. This number jumps to 37% for young American Jews, ages 18-29, compared to 24% of U.S. adults 30 and older.

#### 4. American Jews pursuing higher education are experiencing some lows.

Chants of “[From the River to the Sea](#),” calls for an intifada, threats of lower grades if they support Israel. These are just some of the affronts that Jewish college students faced this past year. You can read about them here in AJC’s Behind the Numbers, which features interviews with American Jews about how rising antisemitism impacts their daily lives.

As part of the report, AJC surveyed American Jews who now attend or recently attended college or had children attending college. Those questions revealed that roughly one in ten American Jews with recent or current college experience have felt or been excluded from a group or an event on campus because they are Jewish. Slightly more (14%) have felt or been excluded from a campus group or event because of their assumed or actual connection to Israel. Just over a quarter (26%) say they have had trouble taking time off from class or have been told they could not miss class for the Jewish holidays.

“I think what’s really important here is that these anxieties are leading to behavioral changes within Jewish college students,” Wyschogrod Fredman said. “And these are often changes that they feel forced to make. Students feel singled out for who they are and what they believe in.”

One in five American Jewish respondents (19%) feel unsafe attending Jewish institutions with which they are affiliated because of antisemitism. One in five (21%) say they have avoided wearing or carrying things that identify them as Jewish; and 18% say they have

ever felt uncomfortable or unsafe at a campus event because they are Jewish.

#### 5. Americans know antisemitism is a problem for society, but more can be done.

A possible silver lining of the survey is that more Americans know what antisemitism is this year compared to past years, and they also recognize it as a problem for society. Seven in 10 (69%) U.S. adults said they’d heard the term antisemitism and know what it means.

While this was an improvement from years past, it’s worth noting that the field research was conducted at the same time that the [antisemitic rants and conspiracy theories spewed by rapper Kanye West](#)<sup>5</sup>, now known as Ye, made headlines and was met with considerable backlash throughout much of American society. In addition to inflammatory interviews, West’s Twitter posts threatening Jews reached a Twitter audience of more than 33 million followers.

Nearly half of American Jews (48%) – and almost six in ten (59%) Jewish young adults – still say antisemitism is taken less seriously than other forms of hate and bigotry. “Kanye West’s antisemitism, in many ways, was taken seriously,” Huffnagle said. “But for many in the Jewish community, it was a welcomed surprise given that much antisemitism of the last few years has not been taken seriously nor widely condemned. How do we continue to shine a spotlight on what is a daily reality for many American Jews? That is what we are doing now.”

More than one in three (36%) Americans reported seeing antisemitism at least once in the past year. Of those Americans, the majority saw it online or on social media (82%) followed by on the street (19%), in a store (14%), and in public transit (10%). But even though U.S. adults see antisemitism, only 22% think antisemitism is a very serious problem in the U.S. and only 16% say it has increased a lot in the past 5 years.

Thankfully, nine in ten Americans (91%) believe antisemitism is a problem for everyone and affects society as a whole. They resoundingly say antisemitism is not only a problem for Jews. In addition, nine in 10 Americans

also believe that anti-Zionism, reflected in the phrase “Israel has no right to exist,” is antisemitic. Similarly, most Americans familiar with the [anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions \(BDS\) movement](#)<sup>6</sup>, believe it is either mostly antisemitic (39%) or has some

antisemitic supporters (47%). These findings suggest significant progress has been made, but there is still work to be done.

1. <https://www.ajc.org/AntisemitismReport2022>
2. <https://www.ajc.org/news/podcast/shabbat-shalom-no-more-one-year-later-colleyville-synagogue-wrestles-with-impact-of-hostage>
3. <https://ajc.org/ToughAntisemitismQuestions>
4. <https://www.ajc.org/translatehate/From-the-River-to-the-Sea>
5. <https://www.ajc.org/news/5-of-kanye-west-s-antisemitic-remarks-explained>
6. <https://www.ajc.org/news/tough-questions-on-the-anti-israel-bds-movement-answered>

## Additional Resources

### AJC's Translate Hate

<https://www.ajc.org/TranslateHate>

### AJC's State of Antisemitism in America 2022 report

<https://ajc.org/AntisemitismReport2022>

### International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism

<https://ajc.org/WorkingDefinition>

### AJC's Guides for America on Countering Antisemitism

<https://www.ajc.org/NationalStrategyGuides>

### AJC's Call to Action Against Antisemitism in America

<https://www.ajc.org/CalltoAction>

### Know Your Rights: A Student's Guide to Jewish Activism

<http://ajc.org/KnowYourRights>

### AJC Campus Library

<https://www.ajc.org/CampusLibrary>

### The Tree of Life Center: Remember, Rebuild, and Renew

<https://www.rememberrebuildrenew.org>



# שנאת חנם

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A Resource Guide for Rabbis & Others  
**on Antisemitism**