

Anti-Semitism - Stage 4

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It's been said that the world's oldest disease is anti-Semitism. But there is something new about this old disease. In fact, this disease had already mutated three times, and we are now suffering through its fourth mutation. Let's first look at the previous three:

The rationale for the first mutation of anti-Semitism was displayed by Augustine in the *Adversos Judaeos* (Against the Jews) and in book 4 of *The City of God*, both of which date to about 425 C.E. Augustine believed that Jews should be allowed to survive but not thrive. Rather their "backs" must be "bent down always." Former Catholic priest James Carol, in his acclaimed work *Constantine's Sword*, sums up Augustine's approach as such: "Their [the Jews] homelessness and misery are the proper punishment for their refusal to recognize the truth of the church's claim. And more their misery is another proof of those claims."

It's circular logic. Make the Jews suffer and then use their suffering as proof of their guilt. So Jews were to be allowed to survive in a lowly manner to demonstrate what happens to those who reject the church. While this live-but-don't-let-live-well attitude was demeaning, it allowed Jews to exist by ensuring an end to violent assaults against them.

The second mutation of anti-Semitism can be dated to the beginning of the Crusades in 1096. Jews were no longer accused only of rejecting Christ, but also of poisoning wells and spreading the plague. Tragedy after tragedy ensued as Jews were expelled, forced to live in ghettos, and subjected to the inquisition in an attempt to save their souls and to murderous pogroms.

Ironically, the third mutation of anti-Semitism was born during the Enlightenment. In 1879 Wilhelm Marr coined a new term "anti-Semitism." As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' explains: "The fact that

a new name was needed signals the change from the past. No longer would a rational prejudice be based on the sacred texts of Christianity. It was therefore relocated from religion to race. Jews were hated not because of their beliefs but because of their ethnicity...Thus racial anti-Semitism was born.”

The change to racial anti-Semitism was literally deadly. After all, you can change your religion but not your race. This most vicious form of anti-Semitism culminated in the *Shoah* (Holocaust) and wiped out one third of world Jewry.

For a time guilt over the Holocaust made it politically incorrect to be openly anti-Semitic in Europe, and even today many don't want to acknowledge they are practicing a form of bigotry. These anti-Semites have found a way to have their *traif* (non-kosher) cake and eat it too. Instead of engaging in overt anti-Semitism, they engage in “anti-Israelism” as Melanie Phillips refers to it in a piece in *Commentary*. This is the fourth and current mutation.

As Phillips explains, anti-Israelism has exactly the same characteristics that make traditional anti-Semitism a unique derangement. Both are based entirely on falsehoods and malicious distortions; both single out Israel and the Jews for double standards and treatment afforded to no other nation; both accuse Israel or the Jews of crimes of which they are not only innocent but are in fact the victims; both dehumanize Israel or the Jewish people; both impute to Israel or the Jewish people demonic global conspiratorial power; both are utterly beyond reason.

However, this treatment of Israel is justified as mere "criticism" of its behavior. It's not criticism. As Phillips puts it, “Criticism is rational. This is irrational and malicious demonization and delegitimization of Israel and of Zionism. Zionism is merely the right of the Jewish people to self-determination. This anti-Zionism singles out the Jews alone for the destruction of their nationhood. If Israel were to abide the double standards that its critics want it to, the Jewish state would lose the ability to defend itself and cease to be.”

Phillips compares making sense of this new anti-Semitism to peeling a rotten onion. As you peel deeper, it just gets worse. It's based on the Marxist view that everything must be understood in

terms of political power. “The world is divided into the powerful and the powerless. Those with power can never be good; those without power can never be bad. Those who make money have power over those who don't make money. Those who make money are bad; those without money are good. Jews make money. Therefore Jews are powerful and bad. Israel...is seen as menacingly powerful.”

And Israel’s power only reinforces this stereotype. The fact that Israel only equips itself with such might out of necessity, for the purpose of national survival, doesn’t factor in for these neo anti-Semites. Rather, it reinforces the paranoid delusion that the Jews are so powerful that they pose a threat to everyone.

The next layer of the onion is even uglier. Phillips explains “The West will never forgive the Jews for the Holocaust. This isn't just because of the terrible legacy of guilt carried by the West. It is because of jealousy.”

Jealousy? Phillips can’t seriously be suggesting that others are jealous of the suffering the Jews endured during the Holocaust? Before dismissing Phillips, listen to her explanation: “The Holocaust gives the Jews what many in the West perceive as the trump card of victimhood.”

Phillips relates “I have often heard the Jews accused of sucking up all the victimhood in the world and leaving no room for anyone else to be a victim. What does this nonsensical claim mean? It can only mean that the enormity of the crime against the Jews was so vast that people think any victim status claimed by anyone else is rendered minor by comparison and thus devalued.”

But that begs the question, why do these people want to be considered victims in the first place?

Phillips explains “It's because victimization gives them a moral free pass. The belief is that if you are a victim, you can't be held responsible for your own misdeeds. You can never be a victimizer.” It’s this type of misguided logic that allows people to view terrorists as freedom fighters and heroes. Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of Britain's Labor party and possibly the next prime minister of Great Britain, went so far as to refer to Hamas and Hezbollah as "friends" and invited them to parliament in 2009.

To what lengths will people go to attain this prized victim status? During the week of Holocaust Memorial Day, PA TV misrepresented a photograph of concentration-camp victims as Arabs and claimed that Jews burned Arabs in Nazi ovens.

The big lie that underlies the claim of this fourth mutation is that the Jews have obtained the power they so abuse by skillfully playing the victims card. However, this claim runs contrary to Jewish values and history. As *Bnei Yisrael* (the Children of Israel) found themselves with their backs to the sea and the Egyptian army bearing down on them, they panicked. Moshe (Moses) reassured them that there was nothing to worry about, “God will make war for you and you shall remain silent” (Exodus 14:14). But God responded to Moshe *Ma teetzak aylai* (why are you crying out to me?). God is saying to Moshe, don’t passively play the role of the victim and expect me to take care of your problems. Take charge, raise your staff, split the sea and have *Bnei Yisrael* go forward.

Only after Moshe and the people stopped viewing themselves as victims and showed their willingness to venture forward, did God intervene. First, by moving his angel and cloud, which had been leading the people to the back, to create a barrier between the Israelites and their pursuers. And secondly, by splitting the sea.

Yes, God worked a miracle to save his people, but only after the people took the initiative. The Talmud actually cautions us not to rely on miracles (Kiddushin 39b). Rather, we must take the initiative as our ancestors did.

Though we feel secure in the U.S. (God bless America), we must not forget that the fourth mutation of anti-Semitism, which is propelling an exodus of Jews from Europe to Israel, is a stark reminder of the importance of maintaining the Jewish State. What can we do to safeguard Israel, being that it’s insufficient to rely on miracles? Since we’re fighting the world’s oldest disease, anti-Semitism, I’m going to prescribe three courses of action.

Prescription 1: Be informed and speak up

Don’t get all of your news about Israel from one source. On May 15 the *New York Times* published an article claiming that

Israel had killed “60 protesters” at the Gaza border the previous day. This even though the *Times* reported the Israeli military claimed eleven of the dead were armed Hamas members in civilian attire engaging in activities such as throwing grenades at Israeli soldiers. But if at least 11 of those killed were reportedly armed fighters engaged in hostilities, why did subsequent *New York Times* pieces claim that “60 protesters” were killed that day? When CAMERA (Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America) asked about this apparent misuse of language, the *Times* insisted that it’s reporting on the events was accurate. When asked to clarify whether that means its reporters concluded, contrary to Israel's assertion, that none of the 60 killed were in fact shooting at Israelis or planting explosives, or, if not, whether it means the newspaper feels comfortable describing armed militants among the 60 dead as “protesters,” editors declined to comment.

My comment is “How very disappointing,” that the paper of record wouldn’t clarify the record. By the way, two days after the event, Hamas bragged that 50 of those who died were members of their organization. So much for claims that this was a peaceful protest! When you hear people citing inaccurate information (often innocently) they’ve read, don’t remain silent like a passive victim. Look at the situation as a teachable moment and share with them the true reality of the situation.

Prescription 2: Speak up in an organized fashion

One of the reasons we come together to make our petitions before God together is because there is strength in numbers. Likewise, our political voice is louder when we band together. Get involved in groups that advocate on behalf of Israel and please strongly consider joining our delegation in March at the AIPAC Policy Conference in Washington. Our lobbying session gives you the opportunity to join together with your fellow Delawareans and Pennsylvanians and affect U.S. policy. And this is not just a feel good opportunity. Your presence really does make a difference.

The Israeli Prime Minister wouldn’t appear year after year at AIPAC if our efforts weren’t of real value to Israel.

Prescription 3: Join us in Israel

History has taught us that the best antidote to the world's oldest disease is a Jewish state.

And there's no better way to show your support for that state than by going there. So as I stand before you on this night of *Kol Nidre*, my final prescription for you is a trip to Israel. The good news is you don't have to go alone. Rabbi Beals and I are leading a trip this coming June! Step forward and join us.

Am Yisrael Chai