



Combating Antisemitism

“The wolf will dwell beside the lamb; the leopard will lie down alongside a kid goat” (Isaiah 11:6).

Maimonides interprets Isaiah’s prophecy of predators turning docile as a foretelling of the extinction of antisemitism. For millennia, Jews were like a lone lamb endangered by hostile forces. Ultimately, however, the people who were bent on our harm will live harmoniously with us.

Despite impressive strides in recent decades in tolerance and equality, Isaiah’s peaceful vision remains unfulfilled. Recent surveys of American Jews demonstrate that antisemitism is a clear and growing concern. A survey of British Jews found that 42 percent have considered leaving the U.K., and 85 percent of those cited antisemitism in politics as their motivation. Antisemitism remains a global hot topic in news, politics, and social media, at schools and on college campuses.

With the recent worldwide resurgence of antisemitism, the Rohr Jewish Learning Institute saw a need for a course that would address this topic systematically on the basis of classic sources and the best of today’s thinkers. Combating Antisemitism, a revolutionary four-week course aims to help participants confront antisemitism with purpose, positivity, and pride. The course mobilizes historical analysis, Talmudic sources, Jewish mysticism, and contemporary expert analysis to provide insight, perspective, practical direction, and personal reassurance for the private citizen and public leader alike.

Combating Antisemitism examines the roots of this ancient hatred, probes productive strategies for reducing antisemitism, best practices for dealing with prejudiced public individuals, strategies to cope with personal fears triggered by antisemitism,

and the role of faith. The course investigates the modern fire-breathing dragon—antisemitism taking cover as anti-Israel activism—and highlights methods of forestalling Jewish youth from unwittingly lending their voices to antisemitic agendas. The study is both knowledge-based and emotionally impactful to support, inform, and motivate participants

It is our fervent hope that the coping methods and strategies become obsolete. We pray that this course will soon belong in the history section with the speedy realization of Isaiah’s vision of global harmony, mutual understanding, and genuine goodwill.

Lesson Topics

■ SESSION ONE

The Eternal People

This lesson will take a closer look at the current statistics on anti-Semitism and review a broad strokes history of our people’s remarkable perseverance, to find ample cause for confidence and optimism. We will explore the undeniable Providence we can rely on while we implement practical plans to secure ourselves and our communities.

■ SESSION TWO

No Apologies

We look at some of the explanations for antisemitism that have been offered throughout the ages to emerge with an important principle: the problem with hatred of Jews lies not with the Jews but with the haters. Internalizing this hate is not a healthy response.

■ SESSION THREE

The Promised Land

Today, hatred of Jews commonly manifests itself as antagonism toward the Jewish State. This class distinguishes between classic unvarnished antisemitism and more nuanced substrains. It also examines the current state of Israel education and ultimately contemplates the very nature of Jewish nationhood.

■ SESSION FOUR

Change of Heart

Psychology, neuroscience, and recent history show us that neither friend nor foe should ever be taken for granted. With a bit of subtlety and conviction, and always with trust in G-d, we find that a sober knowledge of the dark days of the past enables us to take an optimistic perspective as the most reasonable response to our history.

Selected Bibliography

Periodicals and Reports

- “Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents, 2019” (B’nai Brith of Canada)
- Antisemitism Barometer, 2019* (London: Campaign Against Antisemitism)
- “Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2019,” Major Findings (Anti-Defamation League)
- “Antisemitic Attitudes in the U.S.” (Anti-Defamation League, 2019)
- “Report on Antisemitism in Australia 2020” (Executive Council of Australian Jewry)
- Jay P. Greene, et al., “Are Educated People More Anti-Semitic?” *Tablet*, March 29, 2021
- David Horowitz, “When an Ex-Fatah Palestinian ‘Neighbor’ Took Up a Zionist Author’s Challenge,” *Times of Israel*, June 12, 2009
- Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, “Future Tense—The New Antisemitism. What Is It and How Do We Deal with It?” *The Jewish Chronicle*, November 1, 2007
- Sharansky, “3D Test of Anti-Semitism: Demonization, Double Standards, Delegitimization,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16:3–4, Fall 2004

Books

- David Eagleman, *Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain* (Vintage Books: New York, 2011)
- Sir Martin Gilbert, *The Atlas of Jewish History* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1993)
- Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism* (Brookline, Mass.: Facing History and Ourselves Foundation, 2012)
- Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Antisemitism: Here and Now* (New York: Schocken, 2019)
- Robert Michael and Philip Rosen, *Dictionary of Antisemitism from the Earliest Times to the Present* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2007)
- Cecil Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1940)
- Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, *Future Tense: Jews, Judaism, and Israel in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Schocken Books, 2009)
- Bari Weiss, *How to Fight Anti-Semitism* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2019)

Classic Sources

Josephus, *Against Apion*, Book II, Loeb Classical Library Edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976)

Maimonides, *Epistle to Yemen*

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (*Tsemach Tsedek*), *Derech Mitsvotecha*

Rabbi Yosef of Rosheim, Memoir, no. 16, in *Revue des Études Juives* (Paris: Société des Études Juives, 1888)

