

WHY WE HATE THE JEWS

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"When the Holy Ark would travel, Moshe would say, 'Arise HASHEM, and let Your foes be scattered. Let those that hate You flee from before You.'" — Bamidbar 10:35

In this *posuk*, Moshe Rabbeinu is equating hatred of the Jews with hatred of HASHEM. "Let those that hate **You** flee from before You."

Rashi is bothered by the comparison. Why does Moshe's call the enemies of the Jews, "enemies **of HASHEM**?" Maybe they are just enemies of the Jewish people? Rashi answers, "**Anyone who hates Yisroel hates HASHEM.**" It seems clear that Rashi assumes that the root cause of anti-Semitism is hatred of G-d.

This concept of attributing hatred of **Jews** to hatred of **HASHEM** seems difficult to understand. After all, if we study history, we see many reasons that Jews were hated – and they had nothing to do with hating HASHEM.

The Jealousy Theory

One reason that has been commonly cited for anti-Semitism is simply **jealousy**. Historically, it was the Jew who brought his economic wisdom and acumen to the various countries he inhabited; it was the Jew who became the adviser and confidante to kings and governors. The Jewish contribution to the cultural, scientific, and technological evolution of civilization is nothing short of astounding. Whether in academics, politics, the media, or the professions — from curing polio to discovering atomic energy, from Hollywood to Wall Street — Jews have had an extraordinary influence on human progress. It seems that in business, politics, art, theatre, science, and social movements, the Jews are at the head. With contributions as diverse as those made by Freud, Spinoza, Trotsky, Kafka, Jerry Seinfeld, and Albert Einstein, the Jew excels. From 1901 till 1990, over 22% of Nobel prizewinners worldwide were Jewish, even though Jews constitute less than ¼ of 1% of the world's population.

This alone would seem like a logical reason for anti-Semitism. The Jews have proven to be smarter, more enduring, and more successful than the peoples of the lands into which they were exiled.

However, this isn't the only reason. There are many more.

The Scapegoat Theory

Another cause held responsible for anti-Semitism is the **scapegoat theory**. To gain power or distract the population from their suffering, a monarch would look for a place to put the blame. What better a place than the eternally despised Jew? By arousing the masses to Jew-hatred, an individual seeking power could use this energy as a galvanizing force to bring together masses of unaffiliated individuals. We certainly have seen many instances of this during the past 2,000 years.

The “We Killed Their God” Theory

But there are other reasons that sound plausible. One is **deicide** – we killed their god. The average person would agree that is a sound reason to hate a people. After all, it certainly doesn't sound very friendly, charitable, and kindly to kill god.

The Chosen Nation Theory

Finally, one of the most oft-quoted reasons to hate the Jews is that we make no secret of the fact that we are the Chosen People. As clearly written in the Torah, the Jewish people have been given a unique role to play amongst the nations: to be a light, a guide, and HASHEM's most beloved nation. Is it any wonder that throughout the millennium we have been hated?

But these aren't the only reasons. There are many, many reasons presented to hate the Jews. How does Rashi explain that **anyone who hates Jews, hates HASHEM**? Maybe it is simply one of the reasons above.

The answer – there is no answer

The answer to this question seems to come from the very question itself: why is it that the one constant throughout history is that everyone always hates the Jews? It seems that all things change. Movements come and go; ideologies pass with time; systems of governments evolve. The only thing that doesn't change is that everyone hates the Jews. Rich or poor, powerful or weak, dominant or oppressed, the Jew is hated – and then blamed for causing that very hatred.

Beginning with Avraham Avinu almost 4,000 years ago, there has been an endless stream of reasons to hate the Jew. And that itself is a most curious phenomenon. In whatever country the Jews found themselves, they were loyal and industrious citizens, yet they were always hated and always for different reasons.

Despised in one county for being too powerful, then trampled in another land for being too weak. . .

Segregated into ghettos, then accused of being separatists. . . Accused by capitalists of being communist, hounded by communists because they were "all" capitalists. . . Hated for killing a religion's god, yet equally despised in civilizations that don't worship that god. . . Called "children of the devil" and the devil himself. . . Blamed for the Bubonic Plague and typhus, for poisoning wells and using sacrificial blood for baking *matzahs*. . .

With such varied and assorted rationales, it seems that there is no shortage of creativity when it comes to hating the Jew. The only consistency in reasoning is: we hate the Jews. Why we hate them doesn't matter. The cause of the hatred doesn't matter. The only thing that really matters is that we truly, truly hate them.

What Rashi is teaching us is that there is no plausible reason for anti-Semitism. It can't be explained because it makes no sense. When you look into every cause, not only doesn't it answer the question as to why, you quickly find another circumstance where that cause wasn't present, yet the hatred was still there – as powerful and pervasive as ever.

The Jew represents HASHEM

The pattern that emerges is that there is no logical reason for anti-Semitism until you focus on the real cause – that the Jew represents HASHEM. We are HASHEM's people. When the gentile looks at a Jew, he sees HASHEM, and that image is not always attractive to him.

This concept carries a huge lesson for us. While we may forget our holiness and our destiny, the gentile nations are always there to remind us: we are different, we are unique, and our role is unlike that of any nation. As is quoted in the name of Rav Chaim Volozhin, "If the Jew doesn't make *kiddush*, the *goy* will make *havdalah*."

If we recognize our greatness and live up to our title of the Chosen People, we are then exalted, revered and respected. When we fail to recognize our unique destiny and absorb the cultures of the times, then we are sent reminder after reminder of our unique role amongst the nations – HASHEM's Chosen People.

Rabbi Shafier is the founder of the Shmuz.com – The Shmuz is an engaging, motivating shiur that deals with real life issues.

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