Jewish Self-Hatred Is the Leaven We Must Clear Out

Subtitle (200 characters including spaces):

If there is any hatred more enigmatic than antisemitism, it is Jewish antisemitism. Our self-hatred is a sinister, undying fountain, but it will not dry out until we find its trigger and defuse it.

Body Text:

History is replete with examples of Jews who hated their people so vehemently that they dedicated their entire lives to its destruction. The rebellion of the Maccabees, circa 160 BC, was first and foremost against Hellenized Jews rather than the Seleucid Empire. Likewise, the commander of the Roman armies that conquered Jerusalem and exiled the Jews was Tiberius Julius Alexander, an Alexandrian Jew whose own father had donated the gold and silver for the Temple gates that Alexander shattered. In fact, prior to the ruin of Jerusalem, Julius Alexander obliterated his own Jewish community of Alexandria, causing “the whole district [to be] deluged with blood as 50,000 corpses were heaped up,” according to Jewish-Roman historian Titus Flavius Josephus. Similarly, during the Spanish Inquisition, the chief inquisitor Tomás de Torquemada was of recent Jewish descent, but that did not abate his zeal in expelling and killing the Jews. And just this past century, the Association of German National Jews supported and voted for Hitler and the Nazi Party.

Indeed, George Soros and Noam Chomsky did not invent Jewish self-hatred, a.k.a., Jewish antisemitism. In fact, the past week has seen a galling parade of this mania. First, we learned that the majority of JCCs bomb threats had a single perpetrator and that the felon was not an alt-right zealot or a Muslim extremist, but a 19-year-old Israeli-American from Ashkelon, a small town in southern Israel. Next, we [saw the scores](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28bGxfWdkAg) of self-righteous Jews protesting Vice President Mike Pence’s speech at AIPAC, claiming that if there is no peace for the Palestinians (who declare every other day that they do not want peace with Israel but its destruction) then there will be no peace for Israel. And third, while the state of Israel and some Jewish organizations have finally mustered enough international support to hold an [anti-BDS conference](http://www.fight-bds.com/Events/Ambassadors-Against-BDS/) at the UN General Assembly Hall, the BDS movement itself is rife with Jewish activists and Jewish organizations that support it, such as J Street, Jewish Voice for Peace, and Jews for Justice for Palestine.

Indeed, Jewish self-hatred seems to be an undying fountain of sinister ingenuity. If there is any hatred more enigmatic than antisemitism, it is Jewish antisemitism.

How We Became a Nation

In September 2014, I wrote an article in *The New York Times* titled “[Who Are You People of Israel](http://www.michaellaitman.com/news/the-new-york-times-article-who-are-you-people-of-israel/)” that talked about the unique origin of the Jewish people and the reason for antisemitism. Following numerous requests to elaborate on the idea of Jewish unity as the solution to antisemitism and the sources I relied on to support my view, I wrote a more elaborate essay titled “[Why Do People Hate Jews](http://www.kabbalah.info/bb/why-do-people-hate-jews/#antisemitism).” The essay quickly became a mini-Internet site that contains, in addition to the essay, a video clip explaining the ideas and a free copy of my [book](https://www.amazon.com/Like-Bundle-Reeds-Mutual-Guarantee/dp/1897448821/ref%3Dla_B001JOWFS6_1_21?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1482751433&sr=1-21&refinements=p_82%3AB001JOWFS6), *Like a Bundle of Reeds: Why Unity and Mutual Guarantee Are Today’s Call of the Hour*. Under the constraints of a newspaper column, I can only offer a brief explanation, but you are welcome to follow any of the above links for more details.

Our nation is unique. It was not founded on ethnic or biological affinity, but around an idea. The book *Pirkei De Rabbi Eliezer* (Chapter 24) writes that Abraham, the father of the nation, was very concerned about the Babylonians among whom he lived. He noticed that they were growing increasingly hostile toward each other and asked himself what caused this.

As he reflected on their hatred, writes Maimonides in *Mishneh Torah*, he realized that in all of nature there is perfect balance between light and darkness, expansion and contraction, and construction and destruction. Everything in nature has a balancing counterpart. At the same time, he noticed that unlike the rest of nature, human nature is completely off balance. Among people, self-interest, egoism, and wickedness reign high. The hatred that Abraham discovered in his countryfolk for one another made him realize the truth about human nature, that “the inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth” (Gen 8:21).

Abraham realized that if people did not introduce nature’s balance into human society of their own accord, they would destroy themselves and their society. He began to circulate among the Babylonians the idea that when hatred erupts they need not fight it, but instead increase their efforts to unite. Abraham’s idea began to garner followers, but as we know from Maimonides, *Midrash Rabbah*, and other sources, Nimrod, King of Babylon, was not happy with Abraham’s success and chased him out of Babylon.

Abraham began to wander toward the land of Israel and speak of his idea with people he would come across along the way. His notion was simple: When hatred erupts, cover it with love. Centuries later, King Solomon summarized it with the verse: “Hate stirs strife, and love covers all crimes” (Prov 10:12).

Abraham’s disciples grew more and more united, but it was not until they achieved a profound level of unity and solidarity that they were officially regarded as a nation. The name Mt. Sinai comes from the Hebrew word *sinaa* (hatred). Only when the people of Israel united at the foot of Mt. Sinai and vowed to be “as one man with one heart” did they become worthy of the title, “nation.” At that same time, they were also given the task to continue spreading the method of connection just as Abraham and his disciples had taught it to them. In the words of the Torah, they were tasked with being “a light unto nations.”

The Jewish people continued to develop their connection method and adapt it to the changing needs of each generation, but the principle of covering hate with love remained the same. When a man came to Old Hillel and asked him to teach him the Torah, he simply said, “That which you hate, do not do unto your neighbor; this is the whole of the Torah” (*Masechet Shabbat*, 31a).

Jewish Antisemitism—a Profound Rejection of Our Role

Over the generations, factions of the Jewish people that could not maintain the principle of love that covers hate retired from the nation. These people either assimilated or developed less demanding forms of Judaism, which catered to their growing self-absorption.

While the majority of these factions and individuals disappeared among the nations, some of them, such as the Hellenists, became staunch enemies of Judaism. [Ka’ab al-Aḥbār](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ka%27ab_al-Ahbar), for example, was not only Jewish, but a prominent rabbi from Yemen who converted to Islam and became an important figure in establishing the Sunni denomination. He accompanied Khalif Umar in his voyage to Jerusalem. When Umar asked him for advice concerning a location for a place of worship, Ka’ab pointed to the Temple Mount. In consequence, today’s Dome of the Rock is located precisely where the Second Temple stood before.

When Jews become antisemites, it is not simply a rejection of a faith. It is rather a profound objection to the role that Jews must carry in the world: to circulate Abraham’s method of connection to the entire world. Being “a light unto nations” means setting an example of unity above hatred. This is a grave responsibility to carry because it means that if we do not set an example, the world will have no way to achieve peace and people will blame us for their hatred of each other. We can already see this happening in many places and in many situations, but as hatred and egoism intensify in our societies, this phenomenon will become increasingly commonplace and perilous, unless we provide the antidote by setting an example of defusing hatred by working on unity.

As hard as we may try to show that we are no different from any other nation, we are always treated as outsiders. [Just recently](http://antisemitism.org.il/article/113312/antisemitism-expressed-quarter-german-population), Dr. Andreas Zick of Bielefeld University in Germany revealed that antisemitism is still rampant in Germany. But more importantly, Dr. Zick attributes the ubiquity of Jew-hatred to the fact that Jews are “not being viewed as an integral part of society, but rather as foreigners.”

Indeed, we will continue to be pariahs until we restore our mutual responsibility, our sense of unity and love of others, and become a light of unity unto nations. Then, and only then, we will be welcome everywhere. The most notorious antisemite in American history, Henry Ford, expressed that specific demand in his book *The International Jew—the World’s Foremost Problem*: “Modern reformers, who are constructing model social systems, would do well to look into the social system under which the early Jews were organized.”

The Leaven between Us

During this time of the year, when families are getting together to celebrate Passover, the festival of freedom, we should remember that the one slavery we have yet to cast away is the hatred of our brethren. The *hametz* [leaven] is our unfounded hatred, and removing it, even if just for a week-long holiday, will be our greatest ever cleanup operation. It will also be the greatest service we can do for ourselves, our nation, and the world.

Being “a light unto nations” means setting an example of unity and brotherhood. With our current hatred, we are setting the opposite example. *Biur hametz* [clearing out the leaven] symbolizes the clearing up of our hearts from hatred and preparing them for unity and the establishment of our nation. This is why the festival of freedom, Passover, comes before the festival of the reception of the Torah (*Matan Torah*), which as we said is “love your neighbor as yourself,” and which began our peoplehood.

At a time of conflict and alienation, let us be true Jews—united in love that covers all crimes, and bonded in brotherhood and mutual responsibility.

Happy and kosher (hate free) Passover.