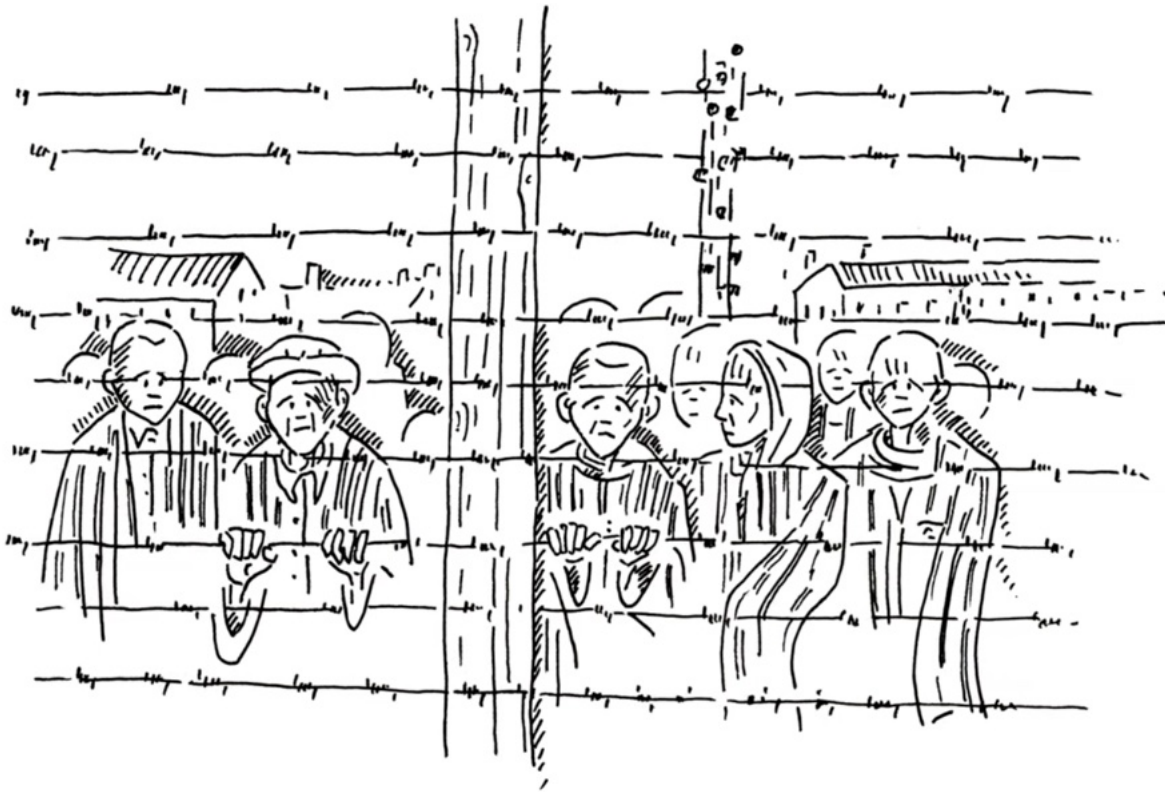


Lesson Guide: Class Sixteen

Hatred and Heroism



Miller Introduction to
Judaism Program

OF AMERICAN JEWISH UNIVERSITY



Miller Introduction to Judaism Program

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Lesson Guide for Class #16: Hatred and Heroism

Class Summary:

Exploring the history of antisemitism and the many forms it has taken over time. Exposure to the testimony of a Holocaust survivor. Reflection on what it means to affiliate with the Jewish community with an awareness of historical and contemporary persecution.

Teaching Note: *There is no replacement for the experience of hearing a Holocaust survivor giving direct testimony and being able to engage in live Q&A. As our survivor population dwindles, if you can bring someone from the community to speak this is a powerful and rare opportunity for students. If not, you can rely on excellent pre-recorded testimonies available online through the Shoah Foundation (sfi.usc.edu) or other sources.*

Objectives:

Students will:

- Become familiar with some aspects of the history of anti-Semitism
- Experience the testimony of a Holocaust survivor and reflect on that experience.
- Consider what it means to identify with the Jewish community, given its history of persecution.

Key Vocabulary:

- Antisemitism
- Auschwitz
- Deicide
- Six Million
- Holocaust/Shoah
- Yom HaShoah
- Final Solution
- “Never Again”

In-Person Teaching Materials:

- Room and door signs
- Name tags and pens
- Chalkboard, white-board, or large flip chart
- Colored markers or chalk
- On One Foot course books or printed PDFs
- Projector, computer & screen if using Class Slide Decks and/or On One Foot videos
- If possible, arrange for either an in-person survivor speaker, or a video link for live chat, or a projector and screen for pre-recorded testimony.

Online Teaching Materials:

- Zoom Pro Account
- PDF of On One Foot chapter
- PowerPoint Class Slide Deck
- Appropriate background, lighting, and sound setup
- If possible, arrange for a survivor speaker or select a pre-recorded testimony online.

Notes On Survivor Speakers

If you have a survivor visiting the class, we recommend you confer ahead of time to determine how much time they need to share their story — typically about 90 minutes, including time for questions.

We further recommend that you invite them to speak about 30-45 minutes into class time, in order to have time to provide background and context before they talk and to retain 20-30 minutes after their presentation to process as a group.

Lecture: A Brief History of Antisemitism

Antisemitism has taken on many different forms throughout Jewish history.

In the Biblical Period:

Most of the stories of Jewish suffering in the Bible (the conquest of Israel, the Babylonian Exile, etc.) are not motivated by anti-Jewish prejudice. The Land of Israel was often imperiled, but that resulted from its geography at the nexus point between the empires of North Africa, Asia Minor, and Mesopotamia. It was always in the path of conquest. On the other hand, that location at an international crossroads

is probably primarily responsible for the incredible way in which game-changing ideas, like monotheism, spread quickly from the Land of Israel throughout the Western world!

However, a few figures and stories in the Biblical era express a particular hatred of Jews. For example, look at the following texts, in their coursebook or slide deck, either as a whole class or in small groups/breakouts:

Pharaoh: “And a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, ‘Look, the Israelite People are growing too numerous for us. Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase; otherwise, in the event of war they may rise and join our enemies’” (Ex. 1:8-10).

Haman: “Haman said to King Ahasuerus: ‘There is a certain people, scattered and dispersed among us, whose laws are different from those of any other people and who do not obey the king, and it is not in your Majesty’s interest to tolerate them.’” (Esther 3:8)

Antiochus: “Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, and that each should give up his customs...And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane Sabbaths and feasts, to defile the sanctuary and the priests, to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and unclean animals, and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, so that they should forget the law and change all the ordinances. And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die.” (1 Maccabees 1:41-50).

Discuss the following questions:

- *What themes do you notice in common between these passages?*
A requirement of uniformity and xenophobic hatred of the perceived “other.”
- *What relationship does this form of antisemitism bear to modern expressions?*
Fear of the Other continues to be a prevalent force in all forms of contemporary hatred – racism, homophobia, Islamophobia, and antisemitism.
- *Why do you think these stories came to be associated with a holiday?*

Holidays help us remember essential lessons from our history. The dangerous consequence of hatred is undoubtedly a lesson worth remembering. Also, in each case, we successfully gained liberation from an oppressor, which is worth celebrating!

Religious Antisemitism:

Antisemitism changes significantly with the introduction of rival monotheistic faiths. First, Christianity tries to take up the mantle of Biblical Judaism and reject its parent religion through the doctrine of supersession. Later, Islam again attempts to claim that it inherits the Biblical tradition and supersedes all previous traditions. Judaism's rejection of both Christian and Muslim claims of supersession lead to intense rivalry and persecution of Jews.

Some examples of antisemitism under Christianity:

Deicide/Christ-killers: The belief that Jews are the murderers of Jesus.

Crusades: Spurred by the preaching of Pope Urban II in 1095, crusaders set out under the banner of the cross to "free" the Holy Land from the Muslims. Along the way, Crusaders murdered thousands of Jews in the throes of religious passion.

Blood Libel: In 1144 CE, a rumor began in England that Jews had kidnapped a Christian child, killed him, drained his blood, and mixed the blood into matzos. This bizarre accusation has been frequently repeated in Europe as well as in the contemporary Middle East.

Black Death (1347 and on): The Bubonic Plague struck Europe in the year 1347. Jews were accused of poisoning wells in France, Spain, Switzerland, and elsewhere. As a result, more than 20,000 were murdered across Europe.

Look at the artistic motif of "*Ecclesia et Synagoga*" found in many medieval churches in the coursebook/slide deck. Notice that Ecclesia (the Church) wears a crown and carries a scepter, symbols of power. At the same time, Synagoga (the Jews) is downcast and blindfolded as a symbol of its foolish rejection of Jesus.

Some examples of antisemitism under Islam:

Dhimmi Laws: Under the Pact of Umar, Jews were placed under a particular category of dhimmi, meaning a second-class citizen, but one protected from being

killed (unlike a non-monotheistic infidel). Various measures were taken against the dhimmis, including a special poll tax (jizya), requirements to wear identifying clothing, requirements that they step off the curb if a Muslim was walking toward them, etc.

Racial Anti-Semitism:

In the 1800s, the modern idea of “race” emerged in Europe. This is strongly linked to the development of modern biology, the concept of taxonomy (ordering higher and lower species), and Darwin’s theory of evolution, which was misunderstood by some to suggest that humans might be ranked from less to more evolved.

The word “antisemitism” was coined in 1879 in Austria. Note the use of a racial “scientific” designation: Semite, rather than referencing the Jewish religion.)

Read and discuss the text from racist anthropologist Houston Stewart Chamberlin in the coursebook. Note the shift toward discussing Jews in biological terms rather than religious terms.

The Shoah is best understood as an outgrowth of this form of racist antisemitism. The goal was not to get Jews to accept a Christian doctrine and convert but rather to “purify the blood” of Europe. This was evident in the Nuremberg Laws that persecuted even those with a single Jewish grandparent who did not practice Judaism.

In religious antisemitism, the goal is to convince the Jews to accept the truth of Christian or Muslim claims. In racial antisemitism, there is no recourse to conversion—Jews are a racial threat by their very nature and must ultimately be eliminated.

Break

Listen: Survivor Testimony

There is no replacement for the experience of hearing a Holocaust survivor giving direct testimony and being able to engage in live Q&A. As our survivor population dwindles, if you can bring someone from the community to speak, this is a powerful and rare opportunity for students. If not, you can rely on excellent pre-recorded testimonies available online through the Shoah Foundation (sfi.usc.edu) or other

sources. If you are having trouble identifying an appropriate recording, please contact the Intro to Judaism office, and we will assist you.

Discussion: Making it Personal

Following the survivor testimony, it is essential to take time as a class to process the experience and reflect particularly on what it means to be connected to the Jewish community, given the historical (and contemporary) persecution it faces.

There is a set of discussion questions in the coursebook. We suggest dividing the group between those who identify as Jewish and those who do not. The groups may be further subdivided into groups of no more than 12, depending on the size of the class.

The rationale for dividing the group in this way is to encourage the different groups to reflect, in safe spaces, about different sets of questions about their own experience. However, if dividing this way is not preferable for a given class, they can be divided into small mixed groups and encouraged to answer whatever questions speak to them.

Allow for discussions to go on as long as necessary. Then, either bring groups back together for a final bit of collective processing and/or journaling, or let them go directly from their small groups.