



WHY JEWS ARE HATED

—Interview with Dr. Yisrael Eldad
by Geula Cohen

Geula Cohen: The Jews aren't exactly a pampered people. Even before they became a nation, they encountered in Egypt a Pharaoh who opened the long, the never-ending list of Jew-haters. There is an adage: "Tell me who your friends are, then I'll know who you are"—meaning, birds of a feather flock together. This saying, I think, can be given a legitimate twist: "Let me see who your foes are, and I'll know who you are." If only for the sake of self-knowledge, we should study our enemies. You have been doing precisely this,

Dr. Eldad, as a historian. You have also come to close grips with the subject in a practical way; I refer to the time when you served as ideological leader of the Stern Group guerrilla fighters in Mandatory Palestine. In the light of your research and experience, could you take us on a sort of quick conducted tour through the 4,000-year-old outpouring of hatred and enmity for the Jews, here, there and everywhere. Is there something special about us Jews, that we have aroused so much animosity in so many climes so often in so many different

civilizations? Is there something special which our foes have in common? The worst tyrants, the Hitlers and the Stalins appearing down the ages in various guises, have hated us the most. Does this argue in favor of the Jews?

Dr. Yisrael Eldad: Let's begin by drawing a distinction between enmity and hatred. As I see it, enmity is a term best applied to relations between governments, between states. Hatred more aptly describes relations between peoples, ethnic groups. For long periods of our history, we Jews were deprived of political sovereignty. We lived as strangers among other nations. Thus we were exposed not to enmity in the ordinary international sense, but rather to hatred. The hatred was all the more acute because besides being aliens, we were nonconformist aliens. As a foreign body, wilfully going our own way, we infuriated our Gentile hosts, who persecuted us. The fact that we survived is a mystery which cannot be rationally explained. It is an awe-inspiring phenomenon. Many Gentiles are positively frightened by it.

To complicate matters, we Jews are an unusually gifted people—and I'm not indulging in boastfulness or false modesty, since the record speaks for itself. All other things being equal, Jews shoot to the top. Which makes them all the more hated. Anti-Jewish sentiment, far from diminishing, grows stronger all the time. In the Dispersion, the Jews have practiced one of two modes of existence. Either they have been shut up in ghettos, leading a separate life of their own. Or they have intermingled with the host nations, assimilating short of forfeiting their Jewish identity. To remain Jews, that is, to be different, we Jews have needed exceptional strength. And very often we have achieved great power. We did so in Egypt when Joseph was second only to Pharaoh. We did so in Shushan, Persia, where Mordechai the Jew sat in the gateway of the royal palace. We did so in Spain, in Germany, in the Soviet Union—until we were toppled by violence. Today the Jews are highly influential in the United States.

Can you wonder at our foes concocting the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, the myth according to which the Jews are conspiring to become the masters of the

universe? Half the world looks to one Redeemer, Jesus, and the other half to another Savior, Marx, and both of them are Jewish. The legend that somehow, somewhere, a Jewish mastermind is bent on taking over the Gentiles is patently absurd when you consider the paucity of our numbers and the magnitude of our sufferings through the generations. All the same, there is no denying that since the days of the Prophets we Jews have shown a strange duality of character: we have at once tended towards self-segregation and towards the salvation of mankind. We definitely have a messianic aura about us, which irks the non-Jews.

We are unique in three respects, our dispersion, our talent, our messianism, which combine to make us hated. But when the Jews in certain countries, in certain eras, have sought to deliver themselves of this hatred by shedding their uniqueness, tragedy has turned into tragic-comedy. The result has been that they made themselves all the more hated. It may not be widely known, but the victims of the Inquisition who were burned at the stake, were not the avowed Jews, but on the contrary the so-called New Christians or Marranos, the Jews who paid lip-service to the cross. Paradoxically, the Jews who took the baptismal waters were the ones to go up in flames. You may be sure it is no coincidence that Nazism arose at the height of Jewish assimilation in Germany.

Geula Cohen: Would you say there was Jewish hatred for the Gentile?

Dr. Yisrael Eldad: No, not hatred, but contempt. Our long periods of self-segregation and our sense of spiritual superiority made us despise the Gentiles. We noted their failings and tended to ignore their achievements. Hellenistic literature in the Second Temple era already alludes to the Jews' contempt for the Gentiles. They in turn hated us to the point of wanting to murder us. Jewish hatred, insofar as it exists, is merely a response to the Gentiles' urge to massacre us.

Why did we look down on the Gentiles? Because they were idolaters. If our nationhood began with the Exodus from Egypt, our spiritual superiority started with Abra-

ham. Remember, in addition to the Scriptures, we have our legends, for instance, the story of Abraham in the fiery furnace. After Abraham has smashed the idols, he is tossed into the furnace by Nimrod. But the Holy One Blessed Be He sends angels down to stand beside Abraham in the blaze, from which he emerges alive. There is a contemporary aspect to this ancient tale. The progeny of Abraham are tossed into the fire—and come out alive against all historical logic. Here you have a vicious circle. Jewish contempt begets Gentile hatred which leads to Gentile crime which weighs upon the Gentile conscience. And the more the Gentile conscience is afflicted, the greater is the Gentile desire to wipe out the object of Gentile guilt. A man or a nation to whom you owe something or whom you have wronged, is one you want to be rid of. The Western world hates us not only because we supposedly crucified Jesus, but rather because we gave them Jesus. Israel is Christendom's uneasy conscience.

Geula Cohen: How about a chronological survey of hostility to Israel? What of the very first outbreak of Jew-hatred in Egypt?

Dr. Yisrael Eldad: Perhaps the most remarkable circumstance is that we don't know the name of the Pharaoh concerned. Hundreds of researchers have asked the same question: Who was this Pharaoh? Was it Rameses, or maybe Marnaftah? The biblical omission of this Pharaoh's name cannot have been unpremeditated. As far as we Jews are concerned, he was the most important of all the Pharaohs. Yet we find that later, lesser Pharaohs are explicitly mentioned. Here, to my mind, is a wonderful example of biblical symbolism in the prophetic vein. If the Pharaoh with whom Moses had so many dealings had been mentioned by name, we would have tended to see the affair in a personal light. Historians would have tried to investigate the mentality, the kinks, the individual motives of this particular Pharaoh, just as nowadays we analyze Hitler's actions and attribute them to paranoia. But by leaving Pharaoh anonymous, Moses is telling us that we are up against an *apersonal* foe. We are confronted not with a specific man but with a specific reality or situation. True,

every persecutor in every land in every period has manifested his own special traits, but not even the most fanatical tyrant or madman operates in a vacuum; he needs certain objective conditions to enable him to do what he does.

Another interesting point about Pharaoh is that his hatred of Israel precedes the Giving of the Torah. So this is not a case of religious strife. It's the fear of Jewish greatness as personified in Joseph. A one-time prisoner becomes an interpreter of dreams and sets about solving an economic crisis through nationalization—a procedure which the Communists would surely approve! So here in Joseph we have the first Freud and the first Marx rolled into one. This opens the cycle of woe which goes by the misnomer anti-Semitism. Joseph, as an alien benefactor in a position of power, incurs in the long run the hatred of the Egyptians.

If we go on to the First Temple period, when the Jews were masters in their own land, we find that relations with the Gentiles were normal. Some Gentiles were our enemies, others—our allies. Hatred for Israel does not recur until the Haman episode, by which time the Jews were exiles.

Haman formulated the classic reason for anti-Semitism: "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom: their laws are different from those of every other people." For the Jews to be scattered among the nations and yet to remain faithful to their own ways, was an offense which prompted Haman to urge his monarch "to destroy, to slay and to annihilate" them. Here we have the first proposal of genocide against the Jews. And, mind you, the most hated Jew was not a ghetto inmate, but one who sat in the palace gate. This assimilated Jew bore the name of Mordechai, derived from the Persian idol Mero-dach, but even this was of no help to him; quite the contrary.

At this point, however, I have to repair a certain omission. Between the two exiles in Egypt and Shushan, between Pharaoh and Haman, there was a diviner Balaam who prophesied that "The people (Israel) shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." The Jews do have this quality of uniqueness,

of standing apart, even when they have their own State. As a consequence, Israel is liable to bring upon itself not only political enmity, but also pathological hatred. Take the case of Antiochus. Historians are puzzled by his persecution of the Jewish religion, since the Hellenistic tradition was one of tolerance. But I can think of two factors which prompted him to behave the way he did. A Greek

could tolerate a host of religions which all bore certain resemblances. But he found it more difficult to put up with Judaism which was so different from all other religions. Then again, he was egged on by Jewish Hellenizers, by Jewish renegades.

The ideologist of hatred in the Roman Hellenistic period was Apion, who wrote what was probably the first book preach-

ing anti-Semitism. From the fragments which remain of this book, we see how Apion set the pattern for anti-Jewish slanders. He claimed that the Exodus from Egypt was an exodus of lepers, that the Jews are commanded to hate all Gentiles, and, most serious of all, that the Jews annually sacrificed in the Temple a Gentile boy, preferably a Greek. The Christians, it would seem, got their blood

libel of ritual child murder from Apion. Another permanent feature of anti-Semitism we find in Apion, is the incitement of the rabble to massacre the Jews. Apion, an earlier Goebbels, fermented hatred on social and economic grounds. Apion lived in Alexandria, and there the Jews of his time held a strong position which easily aroused jealousy. While we're on the subject, let us point out

that the leading intellectuals of Rome—Seneca, Cicero—were also anti-Semites, and probably influenced the anti-Jewish decrees of Hadrian. I mention this to refute the notion that anti-Semitism is confined only to the rabble. Or, if you like, the rabble can also include a Seneca or a Wagner. Intellectual capacity, in other words, is no sure defense against anti-Semitism.

Getting on to the Christian period, we may say that Paul sowed the first seeds of Christian anti-Semitism, for two reasons. First he was angry that the Jews didn't accept Christianity even though Jesus, himself a Jew, addressed himself primarily, indeed exclusively, to the Jews. Secondly, Paul hoped to gain the sympathy of the Gentiles by his attacks on the Jews.

The same motif recurs with Luther. Luther hoped the Jews would accept his religion after he purged Christianity of certain idolatrous elements which had crept into Catholicism. Rejection of his faith by the Jews turned him practically overnight into a full-fledged anti-Semite. German anti-Semitism has owed a lot to vilifications penned by Luther.

After what happened in the Middle Ages, many persons thought that the chief cause of anti-Semitism was religion. The French Revolution turned the clock back to Pharaoh's Egypt, before religion came into the picture.

Irreligious Voltaire was an anti-Semite. So was Napoleon, who wanted to do away with a situation where the Jews constituted a little State within the State. Napoleon the genius perceived the solution to the Jewish question—the restoration of a sovereign Jewish State in Palestine. But when he failed in this attempt, he demanded total assimilation.

Another anti-Semite of genius, one of the greatest writers of all time, Goethe, appreciated the Bible and even admired the Jewish people's talent for survival. Yet he vigorously opposed the emancipation of the Jews. His grievance against the Jews—later shared by Nietzsche—was that they were the source of Christianity. Goethe, a lover of Hellenism, detested the Christian stress on suffering, martyrdom, crucifixion.

The 19th century Emancipation, the exodus from the ghettos and the general

secularization of life, did not do away with anti-Semitism, as the liberals had predicted. As a matter of fact, the term "anti-Semitism" first came into usage in 1870, only one year after the proclamation of equal rights for Jews in Germany. Semantics apart, the immediate practical reaction to the Emancipation was an anti-Semitic campaign.

The term anti-Semitism was coined by a baptized Jew, one Mar, on the basis of his pseudoscientific theory that the Jews and the Semites in general are an inferior race.

The Emancipation startled the Gentiles because they foresaw that the Jews would move in and take over the intellectual life of Germany. The Germans hated the runaway Jew Heinrich Heine more than they did the devout Rabbi of Gur. Wagner's own hatred for the Jews was initially aroused by Mendelssohn.

The ideologist of the new anti-Semitism was one Chamberlain, a Germanified Englishman who was Wagner's son-in-law. He wrote a book calling on the Aryans to take away from the Jews their historical hegemony. He admitted that a large part of the intellectual and spiritual substance of Western civilization was derived from the Jews.

Hitler was not an innovator. He was only the most extreme and systematic executor of what had accumulated in hatred and fear of the Jews, in feelings of guilt and inferiority, since the time of Apion in Alexandria, via Hellenism and Christianity and for religious, social, and economic reasons. All this welled up into the desire and the attempt to bring about utter annihilation.

What characterizes the Germans in contrast to other nations is the need for philosophy, for method and for thoroughness, and this, in addition to psychological factors of the time, gave rise to the phenomenon of Hitler. Let me quote a few typical passages from Hitler's own writings: "Where is there another nation which in the past two thousand years has undergone as few changes in character as the Jewish nation? And where is there another nation that has passed through as many great revolutions as this nation and always come out intact in its way of life from all the holocausts that have come upon humanity? How unlimited and stubborn is the desire for life, for survival and

An Inquisition courtroom, from a 16th century print.





for independence expressed by these facts."

Or: "Two blemishes have been imposed upon humanity by Judaism: in the body—circumcision, in the spirit—conscience . . . The Jew is the anonymous emperor of the world. Britain and Russia are dominions of this empire. England fights for the United States, the United States for England, both of them for Stalin—and all three for the Jews . . ." Jewish strength so impressed, or so over-impressed Hitler, it drove him into a hate-frenzy.

A similar hate-frenzy exists in the Soviet Union and other Communist countries. The Jews' share in the Communist Revolution, both in theory (Marx) and in practice (Trotsky) was, as you know, quite disproportionate to their numbers. Here we get the phenomenon that we noted in early Christianity—the hatred for those who brought Jesus and who, to boot, are accused of having crucified him. The parallelism is borne out by an editorial printed in "Pravda" on the 50th anniversary of the Russian Revolution—it actually referred to Trotsky as "Judas Trotsky."

Stalin hated the Jews because of their huge role in the Revolution and because Trotsky the Jew was not satisfied with Communism in one country, but stood for world-wide revolution. Stalin and his present-day heirs have exploited the deep-seated anti-Semitism of the Russian masses. In a regime which has pretensions to total emancipation, we find that the Jews remain an alien element. Semyonov, the Soviet delegate to the United Nations, recently asked the Israel U.N. delegate Yosef Tekoah: "How have you managed to turn the three million Jews in the Soviet Union into three million Zionists?"

Geula Cohen: A final question. Now that we have the State of Israel, will hatred for the Jews cease and make way for routine enmity, so to speak, the ordinary enmity that frequently divides ordinary nations?

Dr. Yisrael Eldad: I do think so, but it will take a long time. At first, the establishment of the State of Israel complicated relations between the Jewish people and the Gentile world. Here was a shock for official Christianity, which upheld the

dogma that the Jews were scattered to the far ends of the earth, never to be reassembled again in their homeland, because they had rejected the true Savior, Jesus.

The State of Israel also offended that would-be redeemer of the world, Communism, which sees—or saw—itsself as the answer to the Jewish question.

Israel has upset the Gentiles in other ways, too. The revelation of Jewish military genius has knocked down the anti-Semites' belief that the Jews are a pack of cowards. And all the old talk about

the Jews being a bunch of parasites has been shown up for the nonsense it is; Israel has reclaimed the wilderness, built itself up, with its own Jewish hands, with its own Jewish sweat and blood.

In view of Israel's accomplishments, anti-Jewish prejudice ought to have disappeared by now. But prejudice and hatred die hard. Anti-Semitism persists in a country like Poland where hardly any Jews are left. Anti-Semitism among the Gentiles, instead of fading away, may transmute itself into anti-Zionism, into hatred of Israel. The cumulative effect

of many generations of mass hatred will linger. Collective complexes, far more potent than the individual complexes discovered by Freud, have been diagnosed by Freud's disciple, Jung. We Jews will continue to have foes who hold Jesus, as well as Marx and Trotsky, against us. Nevertheless, when the Jews are ingathered in their own land and cease to be a foreign body strewn all over the globe, Israel's position will no doubt be normalized. We may then have our enemies, but shall also have friends, especially if we are strong and prove worthwhile allies.

(Opposite) *The Oranienburgerstrasse synagogue in Berlin going up in flames on the night of November 9, 1938—a prelude to the Holocaust. (Below) On the morrow of the U.N. resolution of November 29, 1947, on the partition of Palestine, the Arabs looted and burned the Jewish commercial center of Jerusalem under the passive gaze of British troops. This scene was photographed by a Jew whose grip on the camera seems to have been—excusably—a bit shaky.*

