

Tracing Motives for Anti-Semitism Through American History

by

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Throughout American history, it is clear that Jews were discriminated against every time a motive could be found against them. When they first arrived in America, Jews felt this time it may be different. America was a new nation. Anti-Semitism was not a part of this new country's history; whereas, in Europe it was a part of the culture since the Middle Ages. Even so, non-Jewish Americans were the children of these Europeans and they believed the centuries of historical anti-Semitism embedded into their cultures: they believed that Jews, in some way or another, were, if not the cause then a symptom of the problems that would plague America. This is why American Jews, from their first arrival in 1585 to the modern day have faced persecution, whether it be from the Dutch in the time of Peter Stuyvesant in the colonial period or anti-Zionist protestors today. American anti-Semitism was different than European anti-Semitism: in the United States it did not result in mass murder nor was it outward discrimination. In fact, American anti-Semitism was always cloaked by a "reason."

Examples that will be discussed in this paper include the following: During the Civil War, General Grant's Order Number 11 disallowed Jews from entering Grants district under the guise of loyalty, as he accused Jews of being disloyal to the Union (accusing Jews of illegal cotton smuggling) and more loyal to themselves or the Confederacy. He cited this as being for the greater good of the Union, as to prevent the south from gaining economically, rather than being a discernible persecution of Jews. Another key example is the college quotas of the 1940s, where the number of Jews going to certain schools, notably Harvard University, was capped because the schools did not want to seem too Jewish. Other subtle excuses for anti-Semitism became apparent, such as the belief that Jews were only out for themselves (for example, World War II). Still, American anti-Semitism was different: Jews were able to be active in changing these

notions against them like they were not able to do in Europe. Though their efforts were not always successful, Jews worked with government officials, including Franklin Delano Roosevelt, to fight against anti-Semitism both nationally and abroad. These examples are key to understanding the popular anti-Semitic tactics that are used in America: Jews were always seen as a symptom of a certain problem, and blaming Jews would solve this problem. Though anti-Semitism could be found in the United States government, often it was not systemic; rather, it was cultural. It could be found in whispers throughout Manhattan or in anonymous polls.

Anti-Semitism in America was not the violent anti-Semitism of Europe, it was subdued and subconscious. American anti-Semitism and its use of excuses will never go away. It will evolve as America does. Any new crisis or political issue will result in prejudice against Jews. Period by period, this paper will survey the history of American anti-Semitism. The last topic this paper explores is the anti-Zionist BDS Movement where Jews are being blamed for the actions of the Israeli government and these actions are being looked at with a microscope. Israeli politics are scrutinized and American Jews, as well as Jews around the world, are often blamed for the actions of the Israeli government. In time, a new issue will come to the surface and American Jews will have to fight against discrimination in other new ways.

ORIGINS OF THE TERMS ANTI-SEMITISM AND ZIONISM AND THEIR PROBLEMS

Anti-Semitism is has a deeply rooted history. In Europe, anti-Semitism had been around in various forms (from blood libel stories to the Holocaust). The term anti-Semitism, according to Encyclopedia Britannica, is defined as bigotry towards Jews as “a religious or a racial group.” This is an important distinction, since treating the Jews as a racial group was key to Nazi anti-

Semitism. The term was conceived by Wilhelm Marr in 1879, and has been referred to by scholars as a misnomer for anti-Jewish sentiment. Jews are only a subset of the Semitic people, as are non-Jewish Arabs (Berenbaum 2019).

Benjamin Halpern, a professor of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis University wrote that “the purely verbal Arab ploy of arguing they cannot be ‘antisemites’ because they too are Semites makes the prejudicial force of the whole anti-Semitic tradition available to them without cost as a weapon against those whom they chose to call ‘Zionists.’” He refers to this as a form of “doublespeak.” Arabs too can be anti-Semitic; Halpern believes “treating [anti-Semitism] strictly as a name” diminishes the history down to semantics (Halperin 1981, 252). “Zionist” is the substitute for “Jew.” Zionism, however, is a concept that not all Jews support.

Theodore Hertzl’s Zionism is a result of European anti-Semitism. The concept of Zionism is inherent in the Jewish religion: the support for the establishment and preservation of a Jewish State dates back to the very first expulsion of the Jews from Israel. With no place to call home, Jews assimilated into the countries they settled in. Anti-Semitism was very prominent during the late 1800s and early 1900s when the Jews in Russia faced attacks and pogroms, resulting in no place to call home. Though Jews were assimilated into secular life, they fervently longed for peace and to return to the Holy Land for the first time in modern history. According to Thane Rosenbaum, Distinguished University Professor at Touro College, anti-Semites believe Zionism has become synonymous with “racism..., apartheid...,” and “responsible for the ethnic cleansing of an indigenous people” (Rosenbaum 2019). Anis Sayegh, director of the Research Center, wrote in his book *The American Council for Judaism* “one of the oft repeated claims

among Arabs...is that every Jew is a Zionist and that Judaism and Zionism are names for the same thing” (Gribetz 2017, 104).

In Bucharest on May 26th, 2016, The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) devised the “working definition” of anti-Semitism. Thirty-one countries, including the United States, are members of the IHRA, and they have all adopted such to work in tandem with their laws. The working definition takes classical forms of anti-Semitism and modernizes them to fit the changing political landscape. Some of the classical forms listed by the IHRA include the involvement at any level in the mistreatment of Jews for reasons of “radical ideology or an extremist view of religion,” the belief of a “world Jewish conspiracy,” Holocaust denial, and the conflation of the acts of one Jew with that of all Jews. In its quest for modernity, the “working definition” also encompasses feelings towards Israel. In regards to Israel, it is considered anti-Semitic to imply Jews are “more loyal to Israel... than to the interests of their own nations,” to compare the Israel government to Nazi Germany, to conflate the actions of Israel with that of all Jews, or deny Israel the right to exist based solely on its identity as a Jewish state (US Department of State, 2017).

JEWS IN THE NEW WORLD

For centuries, Jews were increasingly persecuted against in Europe; so, the New World was a new opportunity for peoples seeking religious freedom. The thirteen colonies offered Europe’s displaced Jews a home. The Spanish Inquisition led to the expulsion of Jews from Spain and later Portugal. 1391 saw the devastation of Spain’s Jewish population. While one third of Jews were massacred, another third converted to a sort of crypto-Judaism (practiced in

secret, and later passed down until mere suggestions of tradition remain), and the final third of Jews were expelled. Some Jews went to Africa and some went to Portugal, where they too were later expelled. When the Jews were then ousted from Portugal, they went to Dutch Central and South American colonies such as Brazil (Altabé 1992, 729).

1585 marked the first time a Jew stepped foot on colonial soil. Prior to his blasphemy indictment on the grounds of being Jewish, Joachim Gaunse worked on Roanoke Island as a metallurgist and a miner engineer. Intermittent amounts of Jews traded throughout the colonies. None, however, settled permanently until 1654 when twenty three Jews left Brazil (which the Portuguese had just taken from the Dutch) for New Amsterdam. They faced the first colonial anti-Semitism. Peter Stuyvesant, the Dutch governor of New Amsterdam, was openly anti-Semitic, calling Jews “deceitful”, “hateful enemies, and blasphemers in the name of Christ.” Spanish and Portuguese Jews, in 1730, built the first North American synagogue in New York City. Called Congregation Shearith Israel, the synagogue provided American Jews with religious education and services, such as access to kosher foods (Sarna 2004, 1-8). Unlike in Europe, anti-Semitism in America did not force Jews to hide. They were able to participate in American society, even in times of war.

During the American Revolution, there was some tolerance towards Jews, especially the hundred that served. One Jew was even able to observe Shabbat on Friday nights instead of serving as a city watchman. Famously, Haym Salomon (founder of the Mikveh Israel Synagogue in Philadelphia and a businessman) served as the “Broker to the Office of Finance,” where is generosity to “Jew and Gentile Alike is well documented.” The coming generations of Jews may have overstated their families’ influence in the revolution to combat the classic question of

loyalty antisemites would often pose towards them (Sarna 2004, 33). This showed that Jews had the ability to be free in America, despite the whispers of anti-Semitism they faced.

EARLY AMERICAN ANTI-SEMITISM

Within the new American government, there was tolerance for all religions. President George Washington made it clear that anti-Semitism would not be tolerated in his administration, hopefully setting a precedent for those to come. In 1790, George Washington recognizes in a letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island “it is now no more that toleration is spoken of as if it were by the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights” (Sarna 2004, xv). Despite the separation of church and state, as well as inherent religious tolerance as per the constitution, Post-Revolution American anti-Semitism was still prevalent; though not as prevalent as European anti-Semitism. Jews were virtually an unknown people in America, save for the few communities where Jews and Christians lived together. In areas where Jews and Christians integrated, Jews had actually achieved higher social status, and often called on the help of their Christian neighbors in rebuilding their synagogues and their communities, which Christians were more than happy to oblige (Sarna 2004, 40-41).

During the Civil War, anti-Semitism rose as paranoia regarding the state of the union increased. Jews were now considered outsiders, which was a cause for concern. Infamously, on December 17th, 1862 future-president but then-general Ulysses S. Grant, in correspondence with his subordinates, demanded “The Jews, as a Class... are hereby expelled from the Department.” Grant’s Order Number 11, expelled all Jews from his district, which included parts of Mississippi

and Kentucky. He ordered that should a Jew return he or she “will be arrested and held in confinement until an opportunity occurs of sending them as prisoners...” Grant believed it was a question of loyalty: Jews were more loyal to each other than they were to the Confederacy (or America in general). Jews fought against this, sending letters President Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln respected Jews, and even his doctor was a Jew he could call upon in times of need. Lincoln, upon learning of Grant’s order, demanded “If such an order has been issued, it will be immediately revoked” (Sarna 2004, 142-143). This shows that American anti-Semitism existed but was not institutionalized. Though it was part of society it was not tolerated by the federal government.

IMMIGRATION AND ZIONISM IN EARLY AMERICA

During the late 19th Century, Eastern European anti-Semitism had reached new heights. Two million Jews fled Eastern Europe from 1881-1914. Jews faced oppression and violence in Russia after Tsar Alexander II’s assassination. 1882 saw the May Laws, which essentially barred Jews from settling anywhere but the Pale of Jewish Settlement. Jews had two emigration options: the Holy Land or the Golden Land, Israel (then Palestine) or America. Zionists felt that Jews could “only truly be safe in their historic home, the Land of Israel.” Those who believed in American immigration felt it was their only option for “freedom and equality” and that they can finally experience for themselves the Enlightenment. In the end, roughly eighty percent of Russian Jewish Emigrants went to America, while three percent went to Israel. Eastern Europe’s Orthodox Rabbis were against American immigration on the grounds that Jews would lose their faith or become “Reformers” (Sarna 2004, 152-154). With the arrival of so many Jews in

America, there was a sense of community within the immigrant societies, such as the establishment of Jewish organizations and committees. While Jews bonded together, there was a rise in anti-Semitism against them in both official and unofficial capacities.

1906 was the year the American Jewish Committee was founded. After Russian aggression towards Jews (pogroms) and new rounds of Jewish immigrants in America, Jews became self-reliant. They created the committee with Pennsylvania state judge Mayer Sulzberg as president, as well as with support from Julius Rosenwald, Oscar S. Straus, and Jacob Schiff. The committee had success in loosening the restrictive immigration policies including the 1832 commercial treaty with Russia, which was accused of Russia “had violated the treaty by refusing to honor the passports of Russian-born, naturalized American citizens” (Breitman 2013, 47-48). Jews were considered outsiders and had to rely on themselves and their communities because non-Jewish citizens were afraid that the country would be overrun by Jews.

It was a culture shock for Jews when arriving in America. The immigrant Jews could finally practice their religion in the open and assimilate with society. With separation of church and state, Jews could easily lose sight of “traditional European Judaism.” Jews did not need to “specify their religion; they were taxed and drafted as human beings only.” They were able to live as people, not necessarily Jews (Sarna 2004, 159). With increased immigration of European Jews, however, American Judaism was beginning to change and reflect a more “traditional” way of life. A Chicago newspaper, *American Hebrew*, declared that “genuine Orthodox views are now becoming fashionable among Jewish young America.” This change in worship was dubbed an American Jewish “renaissance” (Sarna 2004, 137-138). Reform Judaism, a progressive movement, was now seen as “part of the problem” rather than a way of resolving the issues that

plagued Jews in America. This assimilated and Americanized form of Judaism was developing in defiance with the orthodox movements that were now becoming popular. Reform Jews did not keep kosher, nor did they believe in Zionism. Reform Jews believed, for the success of the Jewish religion, it was better to assimilate into the countries they were living in than to have a dedicated state that could be threatened or annihilated (Sarna 2004, 144-145). It was, however, responsible for many American Jewish traditions such as the revival of Chanukah and Sukkot, as well as the use of the term “Jew,” rather than “Hebrew” (Sarna 2004, 151). Orthodox Judaism and Reform Judaism may have been too “radical” for some American Jews. A Hungarian Rabbi named Alexander Kohut pinpointed a middle ground. Conservative Judaism did not bridge the gap between the two poles. Instead, it further divided American Jews (Sarna 2004, 147-148).

In 1885, Reform Jews, under Kaufmann Kohler’s guidance, called for a three day conference near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in which eighteen rabbis and Kohler tried to consolidate the Reform movement into a “common platform.” The Pittsburgh Platform established the Reform opinion on Zionism (Sarna 2004, 148-150). As assimilated members of the American society, Jewish “loyalty” was towards America and no longer towards Jews as a “nation.” Regarding Zionism, the Pittsburgh platform stated “We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine... nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state (Gribetz 2017, 90). Free from European oppression, Judaism could finally build upon itself and grow in America.

In 1937, reform Jews replaced the Pittsburgh Platform with the Columbus Platform, curated in Columbus, Ohio. Jews were now considered a people: “both ethnicity and faith,” instead of solely a religion. As well, without mentioning the term Zionism, it “affirm[ed] the

obligation of all Jewry to aid in its upbuilding as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life” (Sarna 2004, 253-254). This change in the platform was possibly caused by the comfort that Jews felt in America: a place where Jews were able to thrive in communities together. As well, the war was brewing in Western and Central Europe. Jews in those areas needed a place of refuge. The political state of the world was very influential on this decision.

THE LEO FRANK CASE & WORLD WAR I

Anti-Semitism continued in the South throughout the early twentieth century. Tensions were high in the world as the world went to war. Though America did not join the war until 1917, world tensions led to domestic problems such as a spike in anti-Semitism. An important example occurred in Georgia when on April 26th, 1913, thirteen year old Mary Phagan was found dead after receiving her wages from the pencil factory superintendent, Jewish man Leo Frank, the only person who could attest to seeing her before she went missing. Police questioned Frank multiple times, with all of his answers corroborated by witnesses; yet, he was slandered as a “pervert,” having officially been accused of the assault and murder of Mary. When accused himself, Jim Conley, the janitor, claimed to have written out the note Frank allegedly dictated, as well as helped him dispose of the body. Despite Conley’s obvious guilt, Frank was convicted (Dinnerstein 1966, 1-23). While in prison, Frank was nearly killed. He was recovering in the hospital when twenty-five men kidnapped him and lynched him. A public spectacle, the lynching was photographed, and Frank was made a mockery of. According to the townspeople,

his death was justified, with their current descendants still believing Leo Frank murdered Mary Phagan (Dinnerstein 1966, 137-147).

The accusations against Frank have a deep anti-Semitic history. It evokes the medieval anti-Jewish sentiment that led to the blood libel. The blood libel was the theory that Jews were killing Christian children in order to use the blood to bake Matzoh on Passover. For a Jew, in the bigoted turn-of-the-century South, to be connected to the murder of a child, meant instant guilt, regardless of his actual participation in the crime (Johnson 2016). This instance of anti-Semitism was a turning point. It was an act of violence against a Jew, for the sake of accusing a Jew of a crime he did not commit. American anti-Semitism is rarely violent; but that does not mean violence does not occur. These incidents stand out as they highlight the deep-seated hatred for American Jews, even in a modern country founded on principles of freedom of religion.

World War I was one of the most tumultuous times in United States history; yet, Jews in America thrived. Borders were redrawn in Europe with the fall of the Ottoman Empire and European Jews were regaining freedoms they lost in the years prior to the war. American Jews were eager to raise \$63 million for their European counterparts. As well, nearly 250,000 American Jews served in the army, with 3,500 giving their lives as a result of the war. Jewish soldiers had their religion respected while serving, with the creation of the Jewish Welfare Board which provided “religious services and... command wall to wall support” (Sarna 2004, 208-212). Though Jews were generally accepted, waves of anti-Semitism occurred during the war. German Jews, as well as those deemed “radicals” were discriminated against (Sarna 2004, 217). This is a key example of how, in times of crisis, Jews were often blamed. During World War I, Jews were accepted at the surface level, they were allowed to exist; but, society still saw them as the enemy.

THE INTERWAR YEARS

In the years following World War I, anti-Semitism continued to rise. Jews were more likely to be native-born than immigrants in this time. While America was officially their home, there was “apprehension” about the outsider Jews. The 1920s saw the Red Scare, where mostly Jews were accused of being communists or anti-American, due to their Russian heritage (including the small number of Jews that were in fact radicalized Communists) and the contemporary Bolshevik Revolution in Russia which led to the rise of communism (Breitman 2013, 20).

Concurrently, Jews were prominent in the entertainment industry and saw much success as music artists, directors, actors, and writers. For instance, many major studios were created by Jews such as Paramount, MGM, Warner Brothers, and United Artists. Jewish success led Henry Ford to notably state that Hollywood was “exclusively under the control of the Jewish manipulators of the public mind...” It was believed by William Scheafe Chase, and Episcopalian minister, that “Hebrews” were using “a marvelous power for good or evil in the world... for selfish commercial and unpatriotic purposes, even that it has been prostituted to corrupt government, to demoralize youth, and break down Christian religion” (Brook 2016, 5-6). Anti-Semitism regarding Jewish status in Hollywood is long-lasting. The trope of blaming Hollywood for America’s political state is a dogwhistle to blame the Jews.

While the emergence of Jews in the media gave anti-Semites a new reason to discriminate against Jews, there was another, more daunting justification emerging. The pseudo-

science of eugenics and race science were growing, only forwarding the anti-Semitism that was occurring during the interwar years. Jews were considered their own race, inferior to the Anglo-Saxon race. Characteristics of the Jewish race include “long noses, oily skin, distinctive crania, and common personality types,” as well as being generally “non-white” (Breitman 2013, 21-22). President Herbert Hoover, though praised by Jews for his postwar recovery and his nomination of Supreme Court Justice Benjamin Cardozo, was a proponent of “preserving the white ‘Nordic’ basis of American society” which he achieved through restricting the amount of immigrants who came to America (Breitman 2013, 28). Race science gave anti-Semites all the evidence they needed to discriminate against Jews. Here was a ‘scientific’ explanation for why Jews were inferior; and, who would go against science? Though disproven, the idea that Jews were their own race continues to fuel anti-Semitism around the world, a fact actually uniting American anti-Semitism with European anti-Semitism.

With Jews being seen as ‘scientifically’ lesser, their desirability in American institutions was very low. From the 1920s to the 1940s, quotas were placed on the amount of Jews that were admitted to universities. Harvard was a key example of a school that was afraid to become “too Jewish.” In the 1930s, Rutgers College did not allow many Jews into the school in order to stop the school “from becoming ‘denominational (Diner 2004, 209). Other universities included Yale, Princeton, and Columbia. This quota was not strict to universities. As well, clubs, fraternities, hotels, and “elite neighborhoods” were guilty of preventing membership by Jews. It was explicitly spelled out at a hotel that it was “exclusively for gentiles,” while another hotel wrote “no Hebrews or tubercular guests received.” One of the elite neighborhoods, Coney Island in Brooklyn, New York, advertised “sensibly priced, sensibly built, [and] sensibly restricted” (Sarna

2004, 219). These excuses were covert examples of anti-Semitism. The justification that a school would become too denominational is an excuse. The denomination they wanted to prevent was Judaism.

Similar to these quotas, in an attempt to maintain a semblance of white America, an America without a large Jewish percentage, America placed a quota on the number of immigrants allowed in the country. In 1924, The Johnson Reed Act, or the National Origins Immigration Act, limited immigration to ensure America return to its “Protestant character,” actively putting quotas on the amount of Jews allowed into America. In a report written by Wilbur J. Carr for the House Committee on Immigration, there were statements regarding prospective Jewish immigrants as “undesirable” and “of low and physical mental standards.” From 1925 to 1934, only 8,270 Jews were allowed into America each year, a 93% decrease from the peak of Jewish immigration. Jews in America began to face questions of “loyalty, their contribution to America and even the humanity of their (kosher) method of slaughtering animals.” Jews attempted to reach out to their discriminators in the 1923 *American Jewish Year Book*, which released five articles responding to the accusations against Jews that were flying around America. Some Jews, however, felt the responses were unnecessary. “Friends do not need them and enemies would not believe them” said Jewish Theological Seminary professor Israel Davidson (Sarna 2004, 214-218). Questions of the loyalty of Jews to the country they reside in is a classic anti-Semitic dogwhistle. There is the belief that Jews are more loyal to themselves as a ‘nation.’ It is seen repeatedly throughout history. Just as General Grant before him, important political figures such as Henry Ford would question Jewish loyalty to America.

The creator of the assembly line and the founder of one of America's foremost car brands, Henry Ford, was an avid antisemite. Henry Ford's purchased the *Dearborn Independent* and it became an instant success. A ruthless businessman, Ford sent his newspaper to universities and libraries; and as well, he made Ford dealers sell subscriptions to the paper. Ford was adamant and proud of his beliefs. "...I have definite ideas and ideals that I believe are practical for the good of all. I intend giving them to the public without having them garbled, distorted, and misrepresented (Woeste 20123-19).

In 1918, Ford hired William J. Cameron to report for the paper. Cameron identified as a British Israelite, "who believed themselves to be descendants of the Lost Tribes." A key belief of the British Israelites is "that after Moses, the Israelites were divided into two groups — 'Israel and Judah.' The group of Israel (the Anglo-Saxon race) is blessed. The group of Judah (the Jewish people) is damed" (Woeste 2012, 20-24). On behalf of Ford, Cameron contributed articles to the *Dearborn Independent* which released ninety-one anti-Semitic issues from 1919 to 1927 (Sarna 2004, 241).

Ford was inspired by the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* which "presents a Jewish plot to take over the world and reduce non-Jews to abject slavery." The *Protocols* were a fake; but, they were infamously translated and spread throughout the world, including to the "highest echelons of the [U.S] government." The *Independent* released articles regarding the "International Jew: The World's Problem." One article stated "The Jew is the world's enigma. Poor in his masses, he yet controls the world's finances..." By name, Jews were being called out in articles including Louis Marshall and Julius Rosenwald. Ford was sued for libel. The trial, which ended

in a mistrial resulted in Ford's insincere apology, renouncing his anti-Semitism and the forgery that was the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Woeste 2012, 261). Ford stated:

To my great regret I have learned that Jews generally, and particularly those of this country, not only resent these publications as promoting anti-Semitism, but regard me as their enemy. Trusted friends with whom I have conferred recently have assured me in all sincerity that in their opinion the character of the charges and insinuations made against the Jews, both individually and collectively, contained in many of the articles which have been circulated periodically in The Dearborn Independent and have been reprinted in [*The International Jew*], justifies the righteous indignation entertained by Jews everywhere toward me because of the mental anguish occasioned by the unprovoked reflections made upon them (Woeste 2012, 270-71).

Ford's harm to the Jewish community was irreconcilable. Fears spread amongst Jewish communities around America. New Orleans Rabbi Max Heller was quoted as saying "I fear American Judaism is on the eve of an unpalatable battle (Woeste 2012, 48-53). The beginning of the interwar period was marked by the uprising of anti-Semitism partially inspired by Ford's *Independent*.

As the years between the World Wars progressed, Americans felt they were losing morality. In turn, a prohibition was placed on the consumption of alcohol in 1920. It allowed for religious exemptions, leading to what was seen as an increase in the use of alcohol for religious purposes. Some Jews even began to sell illegally alcohol, ruining the already decrepit reputation Jews in America had. Other scandals included the 1919 World Series in which the Chicago

White Sox purposely lost the World Series in collaboration with Jewish gamblers. This led to the accusations that Jews fixed the World Series and have more control in society than they admit (Sarna 2004, 218-219). These scandals did nothing to help the Jewish image in America. It led to whispers and accusations of organized crime. The United States government, under the presidency of Woodrow Wilson was actually supportive of Jews, a fact of importance at the beginning of an especially tumultuous time in American history.

As an ally to Jews during this period, Wilson nominated Supreme Court justice Louis Brandeis, a “radical” Jewish Zionist, who is also described as Wilson’s close confidant (Breitman 2013, 15). Brandeis, however, was accused of influencing Wilson’s progressive agenda, claims also alleged by Ford. Wilson supported the Balfour Declaration (effective 1922), which worked to establish a homeland for the Jews in Palestine, despite opposition from members of his Secretary of State (Breitman 2013, 18-19). In 1920s Europe, Jews were beginning to feel unsafe. Fascism was on the rise so the idea of a Jewish state led to hope for Jews all over the world.

In 1920s Germany, Adolf Hitler was beginning his rise to power. After a failed coup and a prison sentence, Hitler’s campaign of racism and anti-Semitism gained a following and in 1930, Nazis began to win elections in the German legislature. America did not believe Hitler would maintain this following. The *Yiddish Forward*, a left-wing Yiddish publication, believed Hitler to be “no more than a windbag, stupid, filled with *chutzpah*, yet no one to be worried about (Breitman 2013, 37-38).

In America at this time, Catholic anti-Semitism became tangible with the founding of the Christian Front. Catholicism was a minority religion and looked down upon by Protestants and Catholics were often faced similar discrimination to Jews, often living in the same areas.

Catholicism in the 1920s and 1930s was bold in its anti-Semitic initiative, going so far as releasing propagandist media. Created by Father Charles Coughlin, the Christian Front had a magazine called *Social Justice* in which it supported Nazism and opposed communism and with it the Jews. In the same circle was Bishop Fulton J. Sheen who hosted NBC's *The Catholic Hour* which later openly opposed Roosevelt and was a vehicle for subtle anti-Semitism (Breitman 2013, 171). This form of anti-Semitism, the Catholic pro-fascist, anti-Communist, front was characteristic of the time. As aforementioned, Jews of Russian heritage were accused of supporting Communism, which went against the Fascism of the Nazi party. Nazi sympathizers in America, as well as American nationalist, were quick to use this as an excuse to discriminate against Jews.

The end of the 1920s saw an economic crunch and a familiar group was blamed. Jews would be a target during the Great Depression, both in terms of financial failure and discrimination. This discrimination would not be unlike that seen before; but, it would come at a particularly difficult period in world history. Nazism was on the rise in Europe and America had its own problems at home to deal with. Where did Jews fall in this crisis?

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Beginning in 1929, there was one economic failure after another and Jews were particularly susceptible. Synagogues such as New York's Temple Emmanuel saw significant drops in membership; while Jews were no longer able to send their children to religious school. The Bank of the United States, owned by Jews and called by non-Jews the "Pantspressers' Bank," failed in 1930 due to its lack of support from non-Jewish banks. A tenth of America's

Jews suffered from this failure. Fifty thousand of Chicago's Jews were unemployed. Students at yeshivas were scouring for food and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid society was needed to accommodate suffering Jews. Employment offices specific to Jews were opened in order to find jobs that would allow for the observance of Shabbat (Sarna 2004, 255-258). Jews were not receiving much help from their non-Jewish counterparts; but, they were helping each other. This was a sign of strength from a community in peril.

Then-governor Franklin Roosevelt worked as an ally for the Jewish people during this time. In an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Roosevelt condemned the level of anti-Semitism in America during the Depression. When he spoke to the convention of the Independent Order of B'rith Abraham, Roosevelt demanded "education" to fight anti-Semitism. Roosevelt's actions, however, spoke louder than his words. Roosevelt did not back anti-discrimination legislation, citing prohibition has a precursor, a law that he felt could not be enforced (Breitman 2013, 36-37).

FDR, WWII, AND THE HOLOCAUST

"I have made it clear that the United States cannot take part in political arrangements in Europe," Franklin Delano Roosevelt is quoted to have said in his address to Congress on January 4, 1934 (Breitman 2013, 80). Roosevelt is a controversial figure in Jewish history. Roosevelt was not an antisemite. From a young age, he was lectured against anti-Semitism and his mother was "renown" for her participation in Jewish causes. It was Franklin's misguided actions and motives, rather than his morals, that lead to his reputation as an enemy to the Jewish people. Franklin had many friendships and work relationships with Jews (for instance, Progressive Rabbi

and Zionist Stephen S. Wise and Lawyer and Harvard law professor Felix Frankfurter) which he relied on throughout his political career (Breitman 2013, 8-13). It was Eleanor Roosevelt's use of anti-Semitic stereotypes, describing Jews as "pushy, social inferiors," that was much more common than Franklin's acceptance and amicability towards the Jewish people. She even referred to presidential advisor Felix Frankfurter as "an interesting little man but very Jew" (Breitman 2013, 13-23). This anti-Semitism was common in society. Offhand comments about Judaism, pointing out someone as a Jew were some of the more tame ways that Jews were discriminated against in America.

Two of the most important things Roosevelt spoke out about during his campaign were immigration and anti-Semitism. He demanded "humanizing" the immigration restrictions. Regarding Jews, Roosevelt stated "It is foolish to call the Jews a materialistic race. The Jews are idealists primarily. The trouble is that people are so slow to perceive realities and prefer to cling to old- even if untrue- proverbs...The more contact the non-Jew gains with the Jew, the quicker the old prejudices, based on ignorance, will vanish" (Breitman 2013, 42) Roosevelt's support for Jews allowed the Jews to be comfortable in society, knowing the Leader of the Free World was on their side. This was much different than Europe at the time.

After Roosevelt's election, Hitler ascended to power and American Jews began to worry. It became evident that Hitler was more than just a rebel. His rise to power was described by New York rabbi Jacob Katz as "an affront to civilization. Pogroms targeting Jews began in Germany. What was designated a "cold pogrom" institutionalized anti-Semitism. Jews were "slowly froze[n]...out of German economic, political, and cultural life." The Nazis believed in eugenics: Jews were inferior and it was in their blood. With the annexation of the Soviet Union

and Poland, millions of Jews came under Hitler's control and wrath (Breitman 2013, 43-45).

With European anti-Semitism on the rise, domestic Jews were worried about the effect it would have at home and abroad.

Congress released a condemnation against the German-Jewish persecution, a difficult task due to the account of anti-Semitism rampant in congress. Conservatives were preoccupied with Communism and not focused on the German problem. As well, they were continuing to call for immigration restrictions. Louis McFadden, a republican congressman from Pennsylvania, had recently supported the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in a speech. After push from Roosevelt, Senate majority leader Joseph Robinson responded to the persecution; but, he did not call for action. (Breitman 2013, 63). This shows how commonplace anti-Semitism was in politics. McFadden is just one example of the many anti-Semitic Democratic and Republican politicians. Though they were anti-Semitic, the type of discrimination that occurred in America was much more tame than that of Europe.

While Roosevelt preferred neutrality and still refused to make a public statement, he requested that ten thousand German Jews be allowed into America, though, the "details [were] still to be worked out by...the State Department." The Labor Department also negotiated for 250 German child refugees. In 1934, 4,392 German immigrants (an increase from 1,919 the year before) were admitted into America, with a Jewish majority. This was opposed by many conservatives and eugenicist, citing "low-grade Jews" as "inadequate" and that America would become "the world's asylum and poorhouse." (Breitman 2013, 72-75). This harkens back to the

race science and Eugenics that originated in the 1920s. Jews were always going to be seen as lesser than.

Anti-Semitism in America was rampant during this time. Most notably, Madison Square Garden held twenty thousand Nazi sympathizers rallying for Hitler and his “contributions to civilization” The Silver Shirts Legion of America, a fascist organization run by William Dudley Pelley, called for “the forcible removal of the Jew from power.” It was charged that “communist Jews” created the New Deal (dubbed the “Jew Deal”) and had too much influence on Roosevelt. Many other fascist, anti-Semitic groups felt that Jews were running America and that Jews wanted to “overthrow the religious, moral, and governmental systems of the world.” The truth was: Jews did not represent America as officials in the army and navy, the justice and commerce departments, nor abroad (Breitman 2013, 76-78). Other examples of domestic anti-Semitism include the recent disclosure that conservative Alexander Lincoln had written in correspondence that “the Jewish threat is a real one,” meaning the Jews were going to take over America and Roosevelt was their puppet (Breitman 2013, 91).

Roosevelt’s first term was marked by neutrality and prosperity, In 1935 and 1936, Roosevelt signed two neutrality acts in order to remain separate from the impending world conflict. Jewish leaders continued to call upon Roosevelt, asking him to allow more Jewish refugees into the country; though, the majority of America opposed this. Jewish immigration did increase, just not at the rate Roosevelt had assured Jewish leaders. 1936 saw 6,346 immigrants from Germany, with a majority of those being Jewish. Sixty thousand, however, were denied admission into America due to “policies that denied visas despite available quota

spots” (Breitman 2013, 88-90). This systemic anti-Semitism was crucial to the survival of Jews during World War II: the denial of Jewish immigration led to the deaths of thousands.

During the 1936 election, the moderate governor of Kansas, Alf Landon, won the Republican nomination. Landon was reportedly an antisemite, though he condemned the hatred. He still associated himself with known antisemites and anti-Jewish groups, which Rabbi Wise made note of in a conversation with Roosevelt. The campaign was filled with anti-Semitism, with classic accusations flying that Roosevelt was being “controlled” by Jews and that the New Deal too was “controlled” by Jews (Breitman 2013, 92-95). Americans were quick to claim any liberal socialist-leaning policies as being the product of Jews, which recalls the anti-Communist rhetoric used in place of anti-Semitism.

An infamous moment in Roosevelt’s presidency was the handling of the *SS. St Louis* and the Jewish refugees that were aboard. When the *SS. St Louis* landed on Havana’s shore, the 937 German Jewish refugees aboard were denied entry. American Jews were furious. They begged the U.S. government to coerce Cuba into accepting the refugees or even allow the ship to dock in America. In tellings of this story, Roosevelt is infamously noted as an antisemite. In truth, he was incapacitated due to complications from a recent illness and the State Department was in charge of this debacle. As well, Roosevelt did not want to risk the Neutrality Acts being called into question by Congress. The Jews aboard the *St. Louis* had no legal means of entering America and Roosevelt had no legal authority to let them in, though that is no excuse to deny entry to suffering refugees facing concentration camps. As directed by the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees and the Joint Distribution Committee Belgium, Britain, France, and the Netherlands all agreed to admit these passengers as “a special case.” Some of the Jews on this

ship would die in the Holocaust, while others would survive in various countries around Europe (Breitman 2013, 135-138). This mishandling of this refugees crisis shows inconsideration on Roosevelt's part. He would not allow these Jews to enter America. Though it was not outright anti-Semitic, this occurrence lives on the wrong side of history and showed that Jews were considered lesser than in the eyes of America.

Tensions in the world were high when, on January 30, 1939, Hitler called for the "annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe" (Breitman 2013, 144). Americans were falling for Nazi rhetoric. Gallup Polls showed that fifty percent of Americans believed that Jews had too much influence. Twelve percent said they would support a "widespread campaign against Jews" with eight percent pledging their sympathy. Nazi's spewed that only the Jews wanted war against the Nazis. Another rumor spread was the trope that Roosevelt was a puppet for Jews; and, since American sympathizers had believed that for years, they believed the Nazi's in much of what they had to say. Roosevelt was to nominate the Jewish Felix Frankfurter to the Supreme Court after Justice Benjamin Cardozo's death but he hesitated due to fears that he would be seen as having "'Red' sympathies," relaying back to the communist fears of the early 20th century. Roosevelt ultimately nominated Frankfurter and he was approved by the Senate, though not without anti-Semitic opposition. It was alleged that Frankfurter was not American enough, having come from Vienna and naturalized within five years of his arrival in America. (Breitman 2013, 144-146). These all classic examples of American anti-Semitism. The country was not outwardly anti-Semitic, rather anonymously and quietly. When compared to the anti-Semitism of contemporary Europe, it was tame. Any anti-Semitism, is an act of hatred, regardless of nature.

Americans were suspicious of the Jewish refugees. Roosevelt said at a press conference that Nazis were “threatening” the relatives of refugees and in turn these refugees acted as spies under duress. Roosevelt did note that this was a “very, very small percentage of refugees coming out of Germany, but it does apply, and therefore, it is something that we have to watch.” Conservatives jumped upon this: Jews were spies because of their inherent greed. This led to the State Department requiring “legitimate purpose for entering the United States (Breitman 2013, 167-168). This was another question of Jewish loyalty. Would the Jewish refugees truly be spies? Taking this accusation very seriously, anti-Semites used this as a reason not to let Jews into America. They believed Jews were weapons of war.

Roosevelt felt America was not prepared, but not unequipped, to fight three major world powers: Germany, Japan, and Italy. Britain and America had already planned to defend against the Axis powers. Antisemites thought Jews, and not Germany’s aggressions, were to blame for the inching towards war in 1941. While only sixteen percent of the country believed this notion, it was heavily apparent in government. Charles Lindbergh, a staunch isolationist, said America could not tolerate Jewish aggressions and survive. He stated, “I would a hundred times rather see my country ally herself with England, or even with Germany, with all her faults, than the cruelty, the godlessness, and the barbarism that exists in Soviet Russia.” Soviet Russia was a stand-in for Jews. At the time, the Senate was investigating Hollywood movies to see if there was pro-war propaganda. Obviously, this meant they were investigating Jews, including Charlie Chaplin, who made a satire called *The Great Dictator* (Breitman 2013, 186-189). Hollywood is always used as a stand in for the word Jew and are an example of investigations being used to target Jews in so few words.

1941 ended with the attack on Pearl Harbor and America was now at war. Anti-Semitism on the American front of World War II was very prominent in the military because for the first time for many Jews and Christians, they were boarding together. With some Christians who had never even seen Jews before, they relied on stereotypes to attack their military brothers. It was institutional as well, for General George S. Patton was an unapologetic anti-Semite. Jews and Christians, however, worked together to combat anti-Semitism. They 'promote[d] 'better understanding' and goodwill.'" They created the National Conference of Christians and Jews with the goal of building a "brotherhood." This brotherhood lasted throughout the war: Rabbis, Priests, and Ministers all dressed in uniform, signifying that they were all one and for unknown soldier funerals, all three went around each grave and recited the same prayers in English, Latin, and Hebrew (Sarna 2004, 266-267). While war could be a time for the country to come together, it is also a time when tensions led to anti-Semitism. With both discrimination and acceptance in the military, it showed the instability Jews often faced: they never knew where they were safe.

Roosevelt was very sick in his fourth term but his legacy was determined by his previous three terms. Though Roosevelt skirted around Jewish issues to appeal to the greater American population, he worked closely with his Jewish to fight against domestic and foreign anti-Semitism closely with his Jewish. His word choice, the manipulation of his message was so America would unify behind fighting the Nazis, which inherently was a Jewish cause. He ultimately made the mistake in not speaking out early enough about the Jewish crisis leading to anti-Semitism coming to the forefront in American society. When Roosevelt died in his fourth term, his legacy of inaction was sealed (Medoff, 2013)

TRUMAN AND THE CREATION OF ISRAEL

Harry S. Truman was not elected; rather, as vice president, he assumed office after the death of president President Roosevelt in April 1945 (Davidson 2010, 28-29). Truman inherited control of a country in the midst of a world war and with it how to respond to the international Jewish struggle. One of the first and most pressing issues Truman faced was the Palestine Question. Truman, himself, was ardently religious and used his religious background to argue that Jews should return to their biblical home. His advisors told him, whether true or untrue, that all American Jews were Zionists (this just after the Columbus Platform had been adopted more Jews were actually supporting the idea of a Jewish state) and that to secure the Jewish vote, he must too have a Zionist ideology (Davidson 2010, 30).

At the suggestion of Abe Feinberg, a wealthy Jewish democratic donor, Truman spoke declaring “his support for a ‘viable Jewish state’ in Palestine” on Yom Kippur, October 4th, 1946, (Radosh 2009, 188). Truman had many prominent advisors who favored this support including Max Lowenthal, a religious Jew with ties to Felix Frankfurter and Louis Brandeis, and David Niles, a Zionist recycled aid from the Roosevelt Era. He was a supporter of Millenarianism, believing that after the Jews returned to the Holy Land, Jesus would return after a thousand years. Because the State Department did not feel this same way about Palestine, Truman accused them of a “bias” against the Jews. “They were an anti-Semitic bunch over there. They put Jews in the same category as Chinamen and Negroes” (Davidson 2010, 30-32).

Arabs were adamantly against giving away any land to Jews, as they believed they were the true citizens of the land. Zionists would accept any land given to them, though they would have preferred all the land as well. The American government began to sense a war was

brewing; though Truman did not care. He believed his support for Zionism would help him win the 1948 election. Should war break out, the government had a back up plan: a temporary UN trusteeship of the area. This, however, would “derail Jewish statehood” and although Truman agreed to support this, he did not feel it was necessary (Davidson 2010, 35-36).

On November 29th, 1947, the UN voted in support of partition, assuring Jewish immigrants can have a home in Palestine. In November of that year, fighting erupted in the area. Truman placed blame on the UN for its failure to “create an ‘international police force’” and on the Arabs for “having ‘flatly’ refused to work to ‘preserve peace and practice moderation” (Davidson 2010, 36). America’s position on the world stage had changed because of World War II. While prewar, Britain was the most powerful nation in influence, now America was seen as the new super power, and other countries were following its lead. America recognizing the partition was key in other countries following suit.

The State Department decided to go with its second option, to recognize a trusteeship instead of the partition, against the wishes of Truman. Truman had met with Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann and he chose not to tell the government that he pledged his support to Weizmann and the Zionist community. The lack of communication between Truman and his officials caused alarm: would America recognize Israel when Britain’s Palestine Mandate ends? On May 14th, 1948, it was decided that America would, in fact, recognize Israel, against the advise of some state officials who feared a “tremendous reaction... in the Arab world (Davidson 2010, 37). Whether President Truman’s outward support for Zionism and the Jewish people was politically motivated or not, it paved the way for the acceptance of Jews in society and what was called a “Golden Age” in the post-war years.

POST-WAR JUDAISM'S GOLDEN AGE (1945-1967)

Jews in post-World War II America had a newfound acceptance in society. For example, a Jewish girl named Bess Myerson was crowned “Miss America” in 1945 and Hank Greenberg was becoming a household name in baseball. They were considered “secular saints” as they were “symbols of sudden legitimacy...”. In literature, Arthur Miller, Saul Bellow, and Norman Mailer, all Jews, were writing classic works of Jewish-American literature. With the creation of Israel, Americans believed Israel was a “democracy similar in background and institutions to the United States” (Sarna 2004, 273-274). With the success Jews were seeing, they were finally unafraid to be Jewish out in the open. The fear of anti-Semitic persecution behind them, Jews were not afraid of the world around them. Instead, they took their newfound acceptance in stride.

300,000 refugees came from Nazi-occupied Europe to America between 1933 and 1950. Many were children and teachers who wanted to continue their education in America and begin their lives again. Originally, Holocaust survivors lived “among their own kind.” (Sarna 2004, 293-296). References to the Holocaust were often included in the Passover seder, when normally there would only be mentions of the Egyptian slavery. A month was also “dedicated to the study of the Torah in memory of the six million Jews martyred during World War II.” Children were being educated on the tragedies that occurred the decade prior at summer camps and with stories. The Holocaust, as it became known in the 1960s, was commemorated by politicians who “[voiced] their solidarity with the Jewish people” (Diner 2004, 262-265). With

the Holocaust a recent memory, Jews were accepted in society and anti-Semitism was seen as more taboo: persecution of the Jews was an act of evil.

The Cold War proved to again instill fear against Communism in every facet of society. In America, combatting Communism was a matter of religious faith. "Under God" was appended into the Pledge of Allegiance and "In God We Trust" became America's motto. America became publicly religious in order to fight the atheistic Communism. Jews became America's "third faith" and Americans wanted to know about this religion that, after years of stereotypes and its continued minority status, they truly knew nothing about. Will Herberg, a former Marxist, wrote a book called *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* in which he spoke of Americans aligning themselves with the "tripartite scheme" (Sarna 2004, 275). Jews were liberals in a time where liberal ideology was "considered suspect." In fact, Jews often backed Communist and Socialist groups in America. Often Jews did this to support those in need in society, as will be seen in the civil rights movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Russian Communism was feared by Americans. It was seen as the enemy and with many American Jews being of Russian descent, it was no wonder Jews were often stereotyped as Communists themselves. Jews became anxious that they would be accused of supporting Communism and ninety-eight percent of Jews (compare to forty-five percent of protestants) disapproved of Senator Joseph McCarthy's war on Communism. In 1950, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were indicted on charges of conspiracy to commit espionage, accused of telling the Soviet Union about America's atomic bomb. Their execution in 1953 led to various Jewish groups attempting to find a correlation between anti-Communism and anti-Semitism, as well as instilling fear in the everyday American Jewish

citizen that they, too, would be next (Diner 2004, 277-278). Anti-Communism, like anti-Zionism to come, would be a scapegoat to persecute Jews in America.

It is argued by Nathan Glazer in his sociological book *American Judaism* that contrary to the popular belief that the Holocaust was the reason for the uptake in Jewish pride, it was actually to blend into the middle class (Gordan 2015, 496). In post-war America, a third of American Jews moved to the suburbs (Sarna 2004, 282). A culture of middle class Jews was born. No longer were Jews “lower class.” There was a “shift from urban to suburban life, from multiple modes of Judaism to a one-stop synagogue-centered Jewish identity, from unconscious Jewishness to purposeful, intentional Judaism...” Having a strong sense of religion was seen as higher class, whether it be Judaism or Christianity. Jews often learned from their upper class Protestant counterparts what was seen as the proper way of living. “Figuring out ‘how to raise children, how to educate them, where to live so they have suitable playmates...made up a good part of the middle class conversation’” (Gordan 2015, 496-497).

Anti-Semitism never disappeared; but, it did diminish. The *American Jewish Yearbook* wrote in 1950 that “organized anti-Semitic activity, which began to decline after the war, continued at a low ebb.” Americans reported less anti-semitic rhetoric in everyday life, with the amount who claim to have experienced it decreasing from sixty-four percent to twenty-four percent. Restrictions in housing and college quotas were essentially things of the past. Benjamin R. Epstein, director of the Anti-Defamation League believed “the two decades following World War II [were] a ‘period of tremendous progress’ and a ‘golden age.’” (Sarna 2004, 276). Anti-Semitism was fought against through education during this time. The

American Jewish Committee released “Studies in Prejudice,” a series that argued anti-semitism was irrational, and rooted in “deep psychological pathology” (Diner 2004, 281-282).

As well, a thousand synagogues were being built and each had more members than previously thought possible. In the late 1950s, a national poll saw sixty percent of Jews were affiliated with synagogues, the most the twentieth century ever saw and would ever see again. Jews were participating in “occasional practices” such as “lighting the candles on Hanukkah, the celebration of the Passover Seder...and the High Holidays.” As well, when compared to the 1920s, where Jewish children did not attend Jewish schools, nearly eighty percent of Jewish children attended Jewish schools by the end of the 1950s. (Sarna 2004, 278-280).

In regard to civil rights, Jews worked hard fighting to pass laws that would “change American life.” Because of World War II, any discrimination against a group of people was seen by the Jews as a vestige of the decades previous. As well, the Jews’ new found assimilation into American society allowed them to take risks in fighting for the rights of others. Jews were often a big percent of those arrested for demonstrating, such as when one hundred members of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion were arrested during the 1956 Alabama bus boycott. It was true that Jews were still being persecuted, especially in states that were behind in passing civil rights laws. In 1964, Rabbi Arthur J Lelyveld was beaten in Mississippi when fighting for African American voting rights. Jews regularly supported civil rights leaders, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., who had spoke at events funded by Jewish organizations. It was argued by theologian Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel that “supporting civil rights should be considered a mitzvah, an obligation, not a choice.” Jews knew the struggle of discrimination and prejudice and were active in their attempts to prevent African Americans from suffering like they

had. Some Jews, however, were discriminatory and racist towards African Americans. Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf stated that a Jew “lives by his superiority to and distance from the American Negro and the American poor” (Diner 2004, 265-270).

Despite the attacks against Jews who supported the civil rights movement, the white majority of America was slightly more tolerant of Jews, though not fully embracing them. Jews in the American south during the 1950s and 1960s were few in number; but, those that did live there were often more successful than their non-Jewish counterparts. Forty-three percent of Jews in New Orleans earned more than \$10,000, compared to only seven percent of whites in the south that did so. Though, anti-Semitism had declined in the south, especially at lower levels since the trial of Leo Frank, there was still white violence against the Jews. Synagogue bombings in cities such as Nashville and Atlanta and anti-Semitic rhetoric by segregationists were prominent tactics used against Jews in the south. It was claimed in this anti-Jewish rhetoric that “African Americans took their orders from Jews who pushed them to overturn the long-comfortable arrangement of American race relations.” Here, Jews are seen as the reason for the upheaval of American society, just another reason found by antisemites to discriminate against Jews (Diner 2004, 271-274).

Jews faced discrimination by all groups, not just the white majority. Jews and African Americans too were at odds, especially in the mid to late 1960s. New York’s education system had racial inequalities that led to disputes between the two groups. Most of the teachers in these schools were Jews and groups felt “tampering” with the education system that was set in place (ridding any vestiges of segregation by integrating the neighborhoods and schools) would not be beneficial to a system that, for once, benefitted Jews. The implementation of mandatory busing

would, as per most Jewish organizations, “infringe upon the limited-time and energy that our children have available for study of the religious beliefs, ethical precepts, and cultural heritage of our people.” This is because Jews often went directly to synagogue after school, rather than home, where the busses would take them. In 1965, there were numerous black demonstrations that left Jewish stores looted and destroyed. Jewish owned businesses made up eighty percent of those destroyed in Philadelphia. The end of Jewish and African American alliances led to the end of the golden age of postwar Judaism (Diner 2004, 274-276).

ISRAELI AND AMERICAN RELATIONS IN THE LATE 20TH CENTURY

Because of Judaism’s Golden Age, American Jews felt they had the freedom to support Zionism, especially with support from their Non-Jewish counterparts. With all this internal support, America proved to be Israel’s strongest ally. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Israel was under attack by its neighbors in the Middle East. Aggressions against Israel in 1967 led to the United Nations abandoning Israel, removing its forces from the area. Israel prevailed against Egypt and its allies, winning in just six days. The Six Day War instilled fear into America’s Jews, who believed “a new Holocaust seemed to be in the works.” Many people even went to Israel to assist in the war. Jews began to name their children Hebrew names, men began to walk around with *kippot*. “The Era ushered in by the 1967 war allowed them to be Jews wherever they chose.” From 1967 to 1970, Jews made *aliyah*, they moved to Israel and Zionism was on the rise (Diner 2004, 322-326).

While the Israeli cause was being revered by most of America, Black Americans did not support it. When the Six Day War had ended, two thousand African Americans and supporters of

their causes met at the Palmer House Hotel at the University of Chicago to rally against Israel. They compared Israel's actions to those of imperial European countries and that white Israelis had stolen land from the people of color that had been living there. As well, Jews were told they "had no place in the civil rights struggle" (Diner 2004, 334-335).

In the 1980s, Christian evangelicals began to rival Jews in America politically. Jews, who were liberal, were seen as the enemy by deeply conservative evangelicals. Jews stood for everything the evangelicals were against; however, there was one source of agreement: Israel. Evangelicals believed that the Jewish "restoration to their land and to Jerusalem would trigger the Second Coming of Christ." (Diner 2004, 326-327).

Anti-Zionism began to trickle into progressive politics. Israel was increasingly viewed as an "imperialist state" and Zionism was "a form of racism." Most Jews viewed it as a place of "liberation:" finally a home land for Jews to be free; but, some Jews dissented from this belief and formed a group called Breira ("alternative") which quickly gained thousands of members. Zionist Jews felt this group "gave 'aid and comfort... to those who would cut aid to Israel and leave it defenseless before murderers and terrorists." In 1980, Breira became the New Jewish Agenda and faced the same criticism it had faced in the late 1970s (Diner 2004, 327-329).

THE BDS MOVEMENT

The progressive voices of the late 20th century that led the fight against Israel ushered in a new generation of anti-Semitism. Anti-Zionism became the new excuse to hate Jews in America. Israel, in its newly sovereign state, became a scapegoat. Accusations of racism and discrimination against the Palestinian people justified the anti-Semitic rhetoric used against the

Jewish state. There are valid criticisms of Israel, as of every country; but, often times, anti-Jewish hate is veiled as anti-Israel, or anti-Zionist, sentiment. It is not about legitimate criticism of the Israeli government. It is about the delegitimizing and prejudiced rhetoric used to demean and stereotype Israelis and all Jews.

In 2005, the BDS movement was started, though its origins are in dispute. BDS claims their movement was started by Palestinian “civil society” when 170 Palestinian refugee networks, unions, and committees all joined to “boycott, divestment, and sanction” Israel (“What Is BDS?”). The claim that 170 groups joined the BDS call is questionable, because many of these groups, and sources of funding, are untraceable. “They were likely organs of political factions or just fabrications.” The political factions in reference are liberal ones, especially progressive movements. As well, the movement was built off of a 2004 boycott created by Omar Barghouti, a “freelancer” Egyptian national educated in the United States and at Tel Aviv University. He was inspired by 2002 and 2003 calls by British academics (Joffe 2016). They call themselves “a Palestinian-led movement for freedom, justice, and equality.” The BDS movement argues that Israel is colonizing Palestine and “denying Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homes.” The BDS movement specifically accuses Israel of settling on Palestinian land and forcibly removing Palestinians from their homes. They draw their inspiration from the South African anti-apartheid movement (“What Is BDS?”). Their end goal is clear. BDS is working to “dismantle” Israel and they are charging that those who support Israel and live in Israel, namely Jews, are complicit in any action taken against Palestinians who actively aggress the Jewish state. In 2001, the United Nations held the “World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance in Durban.” This

conference was an attempt to “demonize and delegitimize” Israel, comparing it to Apartheid South Africa, which is where BDS may have been inspired. As well, it furthered the concept that “Zionism is racism” (Joffe 2016).

The goal of the BDS movement is for Palestine to gain control of Israel. A founder of BDS, Omar Barghouti said “We definitely oppose a Jewish state in any part of Palestine.” This direct statement, and the usage of the term “Jewish state” are key to understanding the motives of this movement. Palestine, as referred to by the British Mandate, received its official name by Arabs in the area as well as historically the Ottoman Empire. It is not about living peacefully in a two-state solution; instead, it is a call for the eradication of Jews from the area. In her book *Anti-Semitism: Here and Now*, Jewish historian Deborah Lipstadt writes “The BDS movement is a direct descendant of...anti-zionism.” She charges that anti-Israel activists believe Zionism is equivalent to racism and goes even further to say that the denial of a Jewish homeland is the denial of a “Jewish peoplehood” (Lipstadt 2019, 242-252).

Jewish students are often in the crosshairs of BDS anti-Semitism. For instance, Jewish campaigning for student government are often ridiculed by their anti-Israel counterparts while other Jews specifically are requested to promise and sign petitions that they will not participate in any pro-Israel activities (Lipstadt 2019, 257). These actions against Jews are argued as not being inherently anti-Semitic: they are just anti-Israel.

The BDS movement has built itself around this anti-Semitism. Anti-Semites have chosen the cover of anti-Israel sentiment. Like anti-Communism before, anti-Zionism is an excuse for anti-Semitism. Had the BDS movement been a true call against Israel’s policies, rather than

Jews in general, Israel would not be referred to as the “Jewish state,” nor would Jews be accused blindly as being supporters of Israel.

CONCLUSION

As American history progressed, the same anti-Semitic tropes were seen again and again. While Europe had violent explosions of anti-Semitism, America had a war of words. From the time they stepped foot onto American soil, they faced anti-Semitism from Dutch settlers. This continued through the Civil War, where General Ulysses S. Grant was quick to ban Jews from his jurisdiction. After the Civil War, as in the case of Leo Frank, southern anti-Semitism was on the rise: Jews were seen as immoral beings. The Great Depression was blamed on the wealthy Jews of America. When large amounts of Jews were leaving Europe due to persecution, only few were let in, as was seen during both the years before World War I and during World War II. As well, during World War II, when millions of Jews were massacred, the United States government remained silent. It was after the war that Jews finally found a semblance of acceptance: they saw a “Golden Age.” This bubble burst when the relations between Jews and African Americans and Jews and White Christian Americans were severed. When we come to present day, anti-Zionism is the new stand-in for anti-Semitism. All of these instances in American history have the same thing in common: Anti-Semitism is a symptom of a crisis. Whenever America needs a scapegoat, it finds one in the Jews. American Jews have faced contempt, hatred, and discrimination from their counterparts in society; but, they will always persevere, as Jews have done for millennia. Jews have proved to be strong time and time again. With each crisis comes

comradeship between Jews. To conclude, American anti-Semitism may be different from that of Europe; but, neither will destroy the Jewish will to survive.

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