

# CONGREGATION AGUDATH JACOB

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## ANTISEMITISM How to End Jew Hatred

*Understanding and responding to antisemitism is necessary,  
but the ultimate goal must be to prevent it.*

I hope y'all had a peaceful, meaningful and joyful Passover. Personally, I was blessed to share this beautiful holiday and very special moments with my family, Congregation Agudath Jacob, along with some special guests who participated for the first time in our traditional Seder, which was uplifting and grounding, as always.

Now, I would like to shift to something very serious, urgent and something deeply concerning.

I am writing this newsletter article the day after Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, a time when we pause to remember the horrors of our past and the six million Jews who perished simply because they were Jewish. It is chilling that as we reflect on one of that darkest chapter in our history, we find ourselves once again witnessing disturbing parallels, a rise in antisemitism, a rise in irrational hatred, and public spaces turning against Jews, much like what our Jewish People experienced in the years leading up to the Holocaust.

It is TIME TO WAKE UP my dear friends! We are in the midst of something momentous, something that I sincerely believe is urgent and extremely critical for Israel and for the Jewish people.

As a Conservative Jewish Congregation, our "raison d'être" I would think is that we are an institution rooted in at least three moral values:

**Responsibility** for our people, our community and the world.

**Torah**, the Will and the Word of G-d, His Wisdom, which is the transformative power of our Jewish knowledge; and above all,

**Love**, (Ha'avat Israel), because every interaction, every message, must come from a place of deep caring, lovingkindness (Chessed), and compassion.

With these pillars, we are able build a platform to help shape a future for the Jewish people that is both proud and bright.

In the words of the late Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l, of Blessed memory, "Anti-Semitism is the least creative thing you can think of and the most destructive.

But in a sense, anti-Semitism survives because of a weird and dangerous kind of creativity". Let me explain why.

It seems to me that if you actually ask, "What is anti-Semitism? What do anti-Semites believe?" you will immediately see that the answer is a series of contradictions. Jews were hated in the 19th century because they were rich and because they were poor, because they were capitalists and because they were communists. Because they kept to themselves, and because they infiltrated everywhere.

Voltaire hated Jews because of their superstitious faith. Stalin hated Jews because they were rootless cosmopolitans who believed nothing. So, anti-Semitism is a series of internal contradictions, and it can be understood only in the model of epidemiology. Anti-Semitism is a virus that infects the body politic.

Now, the body has the most remarkable, sophisticated system for detecting and defeating viruses that one can imagine: the human immune system. And of course, the way viruses survive is by mutating. And anti-Semitism is a virus that, by my calculation, has mutated three times in the course of 2,000 years, and we are living through the fourth mutation.

Now, as all of us follow what is happening all over university campuses today, young Jewish students fighting an entirely different battle on college campuses. These brave souls have stood up to an appalling wave of antisemitism sweeping through American universities. Places like Harvard, MIT, and Penn, once bastions of tolerance, now harbor irrational hate against Jews. We saw this hatred laid bare when the presidents of these institutions testified before Congress and refused to clearly condemn calls for genocide. It was a dark moment in American Jewish history.

As I am writing this article, this wonderful article from Israel Video Network by Thane Tanenbaum is really a reminder of the Truth and Reality about campus life today.... "Faculty and student priorities took an extreme hard-left and Islamist turn on Oct. 8, 2023—the day after 1,200 Israelis were murdered, butchered, beheaded and gang-raped. In a world more sane than antisemitic, there would have been global solidarity with the Jewish state and a singular determination to rid the world of Palestinian terrorism, once and for all.

Instead, as the Palestinians of Gaza braced themselves for Israel's just and undeniably deserved retaliation, the Western world, which is looking more and more like one big call to prayer these days, and brainless (often Jewish) pink-haired useful idiots on campuses, acting on cue, decided this was the time to mount a global campaign to end *the Jewish state*.

Posters of Israeli and American hostages were ripped down and defaced. Anyone with a sympathetic word about Israel was shouted down. Jewish students were **hounded on campus, vilified on social media, denied access to buildings and walkways by the Hamas Youth**, who decided that Jews must repent before receiving a hall pass. Antisemitically intoxicated students renounced prosaic goals like grades and graduation.

There was now a much higher calling than classroom attendance. Why study Plato and Shakespeare if one could openly scream at Jewish classmates, "I am Hamas!" "Rape is resistance!" and the genocidal ditty that topped the charts, "Globalize the intifada!" Harvard, America's oldest and arguably "best" university (now third and dropping fast), went on a Jew-hating holiday. When the orgiastic celebration over dead Jews commenced on Oct. 8, 31 student groups blamed Israel as being "entirely

responsible” for the crimson carnage the day before.

(ranked 13th, and slipping even faster) took advantage of its proximity to the media capital of the world and wholly redefined the university’s mission. Students and faculty hijacked the campus and declared every day to be Halloween. Masked militants introduced a primal, Neanderthal bloodlust to the Core Curriculum.

Suddenly, **hating Jews became fashionably woke and collegiately sanctioned**. Harvard and Columbia raised the bar on what an **elitist, antisemitic institution of lower learning could look like**. But best of all, they insisted on being paid for the privilege with taxpayer dollars.

**A day of reckoning arrived in the form of Executive Orders by the Trump administration**, demanding that these institutions comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Discriminating against Jewish students and faculty who identify their ethnic and national ancestry with the state of Israel is against the law.

Federal funding and their tax-exempt status were now in jeopardy. Trump froze \$2.3 billion in aid and another \$2.7 million in grants to Harvard, and \$400 million in grants to Columbia, with billions more under review. He even threatened to revoke student visas for incoming Harvard students.

Universities have thus far balked. Harvard filed a lawsuit, claiming, among other things, infringement on its free speech.

Question his motives if you must, but when it came to protecting the civil rights of Jews and defending a democratic ally, Trump meant business. Given the size of their endowments, these schools are big businesses. **Why should the federal government** underwrite what are essentially trade schools in **malicious anti-American, anti-Zionist propaganda**?

Typical of Trump, he acted impulsively. Before being stripped of funding, Title VI requires a hearing. Still, do these universities really believe that they will prevail when the evidence against them is so self-condemning?

There are scant college courses that deign to permit a pro-Zionist reading on the syllabus. Hardly anyone—surely, no one who wants tenure—teaches the legitimacy of the Jewish state. No one dares acknowledge that Zionism is, in actuality, the original and most successful post-colonial movement of self-determination. No one admits the biblically obvious: Jews are indigenous to the Holy Land.

No Ivy League official condemned the massacre on Oct. 7. No one called for the return of the hostages. Most shocking of all, Hamas was treated like a campus mascot. No one highlighted that Hamas is a genocidal death cult that is as much an enemy to Palestinians—most especially, women and homosexuals—as it is to Jews.

Universities demand free speech and academic freedom, but only if it is approved speech and the freedom to spread lies and distort history. To this day, each of these institutions believes that threatening Jews is justifiable so long as it is ancillary to supporting Palestinians and criticizing Israel. Talk about shapeshifting, disingenuous nonsense.

Universities have surrendered critical thinking to groupthink, replaced free speech with selective censorship, and categorically forbidden viewpoint diversity, especially if it involves seeing Israel as anything other than a settler-colonial, apartheid regime.

Punitive measures were necessary and most definitely deserved. They had well over a year and a half to properly respond to the antisemitism that had overtaken their campuses. Instead comes academic jargon and lip service.

At the first, infamous congressional hearing, three presidents of elite schools refused to concede that calling for the genocide of Jews violates their Codes of Conduct.

(It’s not protected under the First Amendment, either.) They dissembled, appearing contemptuous, all the while fearing how their testimony would play at home.

The natives on campus were restless, after all. The joke was on Congress. The gods of DEI were running these elite, out-of-touch, self-indulgent academies. Neither the safety of Jews nor the obligations of open inquiry were going to get in the way. Is it any wonder Jewish enrollment at these schools has been declining?

Even before October 7th, some were already sounding the alarm. One of them was Shabbos Kestenbaum, an alumnus who studied at Aish Hatorah Seminary for two and a half years before going on to Harvard. He spoke out early, and today, he’s the lead plaintiff in a lawsuit against Harvard for its antisemitism.

This Jewish student along with some others and with the help of Aish Hatorah, created a documentary called **Frontline Warriors**, profiling antisemitism at Harvard, UCLA, and Columbia. They thought the Jewish world needed to see the reality our Jewish students are facing. Apparently, Harvard thought differently.

As Aish Hatorah recently received a 999-page legal document from Harvard demanding their communications about the film and their interactions with Shabbos Kestenbaum!

Instead of introspection or reform, they are choosing intimidation. They are not confronting the hate on their campus; they are coming after Aish Hatorah! This is unbelievable! Let that sink in!

Thank G-d and thank to some great Jewish philanthropists and Real Jewish Leadership, this great Jewish institution of Torah reached out to a group of Jewish influencers, individuals who, in the digital age, have cultivated platforms that reach and inspire thousands.

Since October 7th, we have seen these influencers rise as powerful voices for truth, for Israel, and for the Jewish people. Many of them have taken to their channels to combat misinformation and hate with passion and eloquence. I am so glad and thankful, realizing that it was about time the broader Jewish world made room for them at the leadership table.

The Torah tells us in the Book of Genesis 4:9, when G-d confronts Cain after Cain has killed his brother Abel, Cain responds: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” — *Hashomer achi anochi?*

This is not just a rhetorical question. It is the first moment in the Torah when G-d introduces the concept of moral responsibility. And the resounding answer is: Yes. You are. You are your brother’s keeper. You are responsible for one another.

This has always been the Jewish way—to take responsibility not just for ourselves, but for each other, for our communities, and for the Jewish future.

**So, the question is: *Beyond defending Israel and Jews, is there an end in sight to this eruption of world-wide antisemitism?***

Antisemitism is the oldest, most persistent, and most dangerous hatred in history. It is not only ancient—it is uniquely virulent, violent, and, as we’ve seen in every generation, including our own, potentially genocidal.

As the Passover Haggadah says: “**In every generation, they rise up to annihilate us**”.

Since October 7th, this hatred has surged again with chilling clarity. The stated goal of Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran and their proxies is nothing less than the annihilation of the Jewish state. And across the globe, chants like “From the river to the sea” echo that same call.

Jewish communities, Israel, and supporters around the world are mobilizing to defend against this onslaught—politically, legally, militarily, and in the media. But where is the conversation about *solving* antisemitism altogether?

Many people, even some colleagues of mine, believe that antisemitism is inevitable. Historians describe it as a social or psychological disease with no cure. Religious tradition echoes this with the Talmudic line: “Esau hates Jacob.”

So, the common assumption becomes: there is no solution. We must defend ourselves, yes. But to end antisemitism? That sounds naive, even delusional.

And yet—I sincerely and wholeheartedly believe there must be a solution, there is a solution. A moral and spiritual one.

This belief is at the heart of this new film ***Tragic Awakening: A New Look at the Oldest Hatred***, by Raphael Shore, featuring Rawan Osman and Michal Cutler. It is a post October 7<sup>th</sup> film, rethinking antisemitism's roots. And it begins with a diagnosis that challenges prevailing assumptions. I am currently working on the possibility of having a viewing on this film here at our Synagogue, in the very near future and it will be open to view for the entire Waco Community. The dates are not yet secured, I am still working on it...

**As I said just a minute ago, Antisemitism is a spiritual phenomenon to the unique role of the Jewish people.**

Antisemitism is not essentially a disease; it is ultimately a choice. It's a spiritual phenomenon that must be defeated by moral and spiritual clarity and choice.

The Talmud in Tractate Shabbat 89a explains one of the source of antisemitism. It teaches that when G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish People, His Chosen People, at Mount Sinai, hatred (***Sina*** in Hebrew) descended to the world. The root of antisemitism, or ***Sina*** (hatred), is **Sinai**.

At Sinai, the Jewish people received a divine mission: to carry and live by a moral code as the Kingdom of Priests and to be a Light to the Nations. This covenant, received in unity, as “**One People with One Heart**”, **Kelsh Echad, beLev Echad**, is the sole foundation of our identity.

The world's hatred of Jews is not just baseless prejudice. It is, at its root, **a rejection of that mission** and the moral responsibility it carries.

**Ending Jew hatred is not only in exposing lies or winning battles in the court of public opinion. It begins with us—with Jewish unity, clarity of purpose, and reconnection to our covenant with G-d and His Chosen People.**

That means the path to ending Jew hatred is not only in exposing lies or winning battles in the court of public opinion. It begins with us—with Jewish unity, clarity of purpose, and reconnection to our covenant with G-d. This seems to be our first order of the day!

Three key insights guide this vision:

1. **When we are divided**, we are vulnerable. Internal strife weakens us and invites external attacks.
2. **When we lose sight of our national purpose**, we become fragmented and confused about who we are.
3. **When we disconnect from G-d Almighty**, we lose the spiritual confidence and clarity needed to face and defeat evil.

To address antisemitism, we must repair all three.

We first need to unite as a people—not by erasing our differences, but by committing to a shared destiny. As I always remind people; “A JEW is A JEW is A JEW”! Without that unity, we will continue to be reminded by our enemies that we are one family, whether we act like it or not. Do I really have to remind us how did October 7<sup>th</sup> started?

We must embrace our identity not just as a religion or a culture, but as a people with a covenantal destiny, with the Land and the State of Israel security and autonomy (with Judea & Samaria, the biblical homeland included in the State of Israel sovereignty) as its focal point.

And we must confront the spiritual discomfort that modernity has created. As Elie Wiesel wrote: **“You can be a Jew with G-d. You can be a Jew against G-d. But not without G-d.”**

October 7th was a wakeup call. With illusions shattered, we are being called to remember who we are, and why we are here.

Since the root of Jew hatred is Sinai, then our alignment with Sinai—with our mission, values, and G-d—is the antidote.

The Jewish people are not here to convert the world to Judaism, as I feel I need to remind some of you, the readers, that We, the Jewish People NEVER in our entire history, proselytized anyone nor do we ever encourage people to convert to Judaism, but at the same time, let us not forget why we are here for? We are here as ambassadors of Almighty G-d, to educate and to bring the world to universal G-d-based morality, as expressed in the Ten Commandments.

That is our light. And it is precisely that light that has always drawn the darkness against us.

But that mission is also our hope. By fulfilling it, we turn the very cause of antisemitism into its cure.

The prophets spoke of a time when this vision would be realized—a world redeemed by moral clarity and divine truth.

Will it all come at once, with the arrival of the Messiah? Perhaps. I am not a Prophet, but maybe, like the return to Israel, it will unfold in stages, with setbacks and progress, shaped by our choices.

One thing I can reassure you all, the more we live true to our mission, in other word, the more we are, and act as the **“Kingdom of Priests and the Light to the Nations”**, the more the moral and spiritual battle will tilt in our favor.

Evil weakens when our moral might is strengthened. Our greatest weapon is imbuing all fronts - military, political and cultural- with moral and spiritual clarity.

With G-d’s help, and our courage to choose purpose over fear, we can end this ancient hatred and shine a light of truth and peace to all humanity.

**“In every generation, they rise up to annihilate us... and the Holy Blessed One saves us from their hands”.**

To quote once again Rabbi Sacks z”l:

**“Antisemitism begins with the Jews but never ends with the Jews”!**

*Rabbi Ben-Zion Lanxner*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Before we moved to Waco in 2009, we had been members of a wonderful synagogue in Topeka Kansas, for over a dozen years. Our temple was affiliated with the Reform movement and was the only Jewish congregation with rabbinic leadership between Kansas City and Denver. So, naturally, it was warm and welcoming to Jews from across the spectrum of observance and background. We were located in the state capital and our rabbi generally took a main role in any statewide Jewish observances, such as Holocaust Remembrance Day. Over our years there, I rose through the ranks and served on the Board, was head of the religious committee, led services when our rabbi was out of town, sat on the Reform *bet din*, and, my favorite role, helped our rabbi co-teach the official URJ introduction to Judaism curriculum for prospective converts and other interested folks, such as local clergy of other faiths.

Something that I observed right away has stuck with me. People who took the course, especially those seeking to undergo a conversion, typically ended up knowing more about our religion than those of us who were born Jews. I think that many rabbis have made the same observation, regardless of Jewish movement (i.e., Reform, Conservative, Orthodox). I have long felt that even actively observant Jews would benefit from such a course. Gosh, I learned a lot just having to prepare for my class sessions.

I am not trying to make work for our wonderful Rabbi (!), but I would like to suggest that each of us take some time this year to learn more about Judaism in some way. For example, reading a book or books about our history, beliefs, rituals, or great rabbis; the rabbinic literature; important distinctions among the Jewish movements; Israel; *kabbalah*; Jewish music; the liturgy and *siddur*; Yiddish or Ladino culture; and so on. We can all find a topic that would interest us and resonate within us that we would like to learn more about. This could be done communally, perhaps as a study group, but, regardless, we could also each pursue this on our own, focusing on whatever piques our curiosity.

I am just thinking out loud here; nothing has been planned. But if some type of more organized learning is of interest to our members—and if the Rabbi can find the time for this—then let us give this some thought moving forward. One of the several definitions of “Torah” is learning or instruction on holy themes. The rabbis noted that of all the *mitzvot*, Torah is the greatest because it leads to performance of all the other *mitzvot*. So formal study and learning are a holy task and something that can uplift every one of us, our congregation, and the whole Jewish community.

*L'shalom,*  
Jeff Levin

# May Service Schedule

## Friday, May 2

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm  
Candle Lighting 7:52 pm

## Saturday, May 3

Shacharit 10:00 am  
Shabbat Ends 8:49 pm

## Friday, May 9

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm  
Candle Lighting 7:56 pm

## Friday, May 16

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm  
Candle Lighting 8:01 pm

## Saturday, May 17

Shacharit 10:00 am  
Shabbat Ends 9:00 pm

## Friday, May 23

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm  
Candle Lighting 8:06 pm

## Saturday, May 24

Shacharit 10:00 am  
Shabbat Ends 9:05 pm

## Friday, May 30

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm  
Candle Lighting 8:10 pm

## Saturday, May 31

Shacharit 10:00 am  
Shabbat Ends 9:10 pm



May 2

Miguel Perez

May 7

Steven Draher

May 11

Wendy

Dzjadaszek

May 14

Avigail Via

May 20

Betty Bauer

## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

**May 4**

**George & Kathleen  
Keller**

**May 9**

**Craig & Lydia Hoffman**



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

*There are no announcements at this time. Please look for the weekly email with any additional announcements made during the month.*

**THANK YOU** for your donations in April!

### **Shabbat**

Javis Howeth  
Susan Raphael  
Jeff Levin

Henry Hacker  
Michael Pesses  
Inez Bonneville

Steve & Carrie Draher  
George & Kathleen  
Keller

### **In Honor Of**

**Paul and Paula Farmer**

Susan Raphael

# YAHREZEITS

The following names of dearly departed will be read aloud by the Rabbi preceding the Mourner's Kaddish on Shabbat morning. It is fitting and customary that the nearest of kin be present in the synagogue for the recitation of this special prayer in their memory. Attendance not only honors the departed but also enhances and guarantees that a Minyan is present to recite the Kaddish.

## **Kaddish will be read on May 2**

Iyar 3	Maria Gordon Tessie Ruskin
Iyar 4	Lester Englander* Lawrence Emory Lynn* Mrs Sam (Agnes) Rubel* Annie Ray Wizig*
Iyar 5	Abraham Sprecher
Iyar 6	Ruth Bell*
Iyar 7	Jake Berkman* Mrs Rebecca Brickman* Mrs Bertha Rosen*
Iyar 8	M Berlovitz* Abraham Hashfield* Mrs Abe (Eva) Wizig*
Iyar 9	Zorach Hoppenstein*

## **Kaddish will be read on May 9**

Iyar 10	Dr Samuel F Chernoff* Mary Novich* Leona Faye Stuckey
Iyar 11	Max Chodorow* Mrs L Esserman* Mrs Sarah Israel* Lillian Rubenstein Jack Weissman*
Iyar 12	Benjamin Bauer* Joe Leo Siegel
Iyar 13	Abe Adams* Mrs Millie Gardner*
Iyar 14	Fannie Genecov* David Michael Novy* Rhua Settle
Iyar 15	Mrs E Hoffman*
Iyar 16	Gilford B Fred*

## **Kaddish will be read on May 16**

Iyar 17	Julius Berkman Jacob Greenspan* Samuel Kestner* Abe Udashen*
Iyar 18	Jennie Rosenberg* N Suravitz*
Iyar 19	Louis Kleiman* Ralph Leeds*

Iyar 20	Philo Herbert Pesses
Iyar 21	Louis Marks* Lee Wolkoff* Sarah Stein
Iyar 22	Max Hoppenstein* Abe Lewis* Hyman B Novy*
Iyar 23	Mandel H Citrin Mildred Blank

## **Kaddish will be read on May 23**

Iyar 24	Mary Budin* A Polansky* Orpha Starr
Iyar 25	Ryan Younger Blythe Otto Levy David Harry Rubel Sarah Stupak*
Iyar 26	Dave Spreo* Melba Howeth Warren
Iyar 27	Phillip M Citrin Julius Englander* Hannah Lasinker
Iyar 28	Abe Levy*
Iyar 29	Al Jacobson
Sivan 1	Rosaline Gardner* Hennie Genecov Rebecca Zoblotsky*

## **Kaddish will be read on May 30**

Sivan 4	Morris Brickman Max Harris* Frances Lebowitz*
Sivan 5	Ervin Graubard* Audrey Mendelson Hazel Warnstaff Esther Zackin
Sivan 6	Rosa Keen* Jake Kirschner* Killian Michlowitz
Sivan 7	Betty Birnbach Hector Lago Mrs L (Mary) Meinstein* Golde Feigel Wizig*