

Not Only One

*It was not only one man who rose up to destroy us:
in every single generation people rise up to destroy
us – but the Holy One saves us from their hands.
(Haggada)*

The first mention in the Torah of Jews as a people is a prelude to persecution. “A new king, who did not know of Joseph, came into power over Egypt. He said to his people, ‘Look, the people of the children of Israel (*Am Benei Yisrael*) have become too numerous for us. We must act wisely against them” (Ex. 1:8–10). Wisdom in this case means forced labor, followed by enslavement, then the planned murder of every male child. It is the first but not the last attempted genocide in the pages of the Bible. The festival of Purim records a second failed attempt, this time by Haman, who persuades the Persian king to issue a decree “to destroy, slay, and exterminate all the Jews, young and old, women and children, on one day” (Est. 3:13).

Ironically, the first two references to Israel outside the Bible are obituaries for the Jewish people. The Merneptah Stele from Egypt in the thirteenth century BCE, as we noted in an earlier chapter, states: “Israel is laid waste, her seed is no more.” The Mesha Stele, a basalt slab dating from the ninth century BCE, stands today in the Louvre in Paris. In its inscription, Mesha, king of Moab, thanks his deity Chemosh for his

victories in war. It includes the following lines: "As for Omri, king of Israel, he humbled Moab for many years, for Chemosh was angry with his land. And his son followed him and he also said, 'I will humble Moab.' In my time he spoke thus, but I have triumphed over him and over his house, while *Israel has perished forever*." At times it is hard to know which is the greater wonder of history: Jewish survival, or the attempts of others to ensure Israel did not survive.

The historian Robert Wistrich calls anti-Semitism "the longest hatred," and in a way it is, though it has taken too many forms for it to be described as a single phenomenon with one name. The Greek and Latin writers of classical antiquity were often hostile to Jews, accusing them of clannishness, strange customs, and superstitions. Horace condemns them for trying to make converts. Apion criticizes them for failing to worship the same gods as the Alexandrians. Seneca held that they rested on the seventh day because they were lazy. The worst of the pre-Christian polemicists was the Egyptian priest Manetho (third century BCE), who described the Hebrews as a race of lepers who had been thrown out of Egypt. Many of these calumnies survived to be taken up and adapted in later centuries. That has been the fate of anti-Jewish myths: they may be dormant, but they never die. Yet it would be wrong to describe reactions to Jews in antiquity as universally hostile. Evidence suggests that Alexander the Great thought highly of them and rewarded them for their loyalty. Aristotle spoke well of them, as did his successor Theophrastus. Besides, the ancient world was not known for its love of foreigners, whoever they might be.

Something new enters the world with Christianity and with the early decision, following the Council of Jerusalem, that it would become not a religion directed to Jews, but one that sought adherents among the gentiles. A series of fateful judgments was incorporated into Christianity's early texts and developed by the Church fathers: among them that Christianity was the "new Israel," that God had rejected the "old Israel," and that Jews had been guilty of willful blindness and worse in rejecting the Christian messiah. The proposal of Marcion – that Christianity should be separated completely from Judaism, with the New Testament as its only scripture – failed. From then on, Christianity was locked into an adversarial relationship with Judaism, glaringly apparent in the New Testament and the work of Christian thinkers from the second to the

fourth centuries, among them Justin Martyr, Origen, Melito, Tertullian, Eusebius, Gregory of Nyssa, and St. John Chrysostom. This *Adversus Judaeos* tradition, often savage in its rhetoric, left a deep mark on the development of Christianity, a fact that became immensely consequential when – with the conversion of the Roman emperor Constantine in 313 – Christianity became a world power, which it was to remain for almost 1,500 years.

Hostility deepened into massacre with the First Crusade (1096), during which, on their way to the Holy Land, Christians massacred Jewish communities in northern France and Germany. It was at this time that the line “Pour out Your rage upon the nations that do not know You” (Ps. 79:6) began to appear in Haggadot, the one note of Jewish protest against the Christian slaughter of Jews in the name of God. From then on, the anti-Judaism of the Church began to take on a more irrational, demonic character. During the Middle Ages, Jews were accused of ritual murder, poisoning wells, desecrating the host, causing the Black Death, and colluding with the Devil. There were periodic forced conversions, public disputations, book burnings, show trials, burnings at the stake, mob attacks, and massacres. In the years following the Black Death alone (1347–50), some two hundred Jewish communities were destroyed. Jews were expelled from Brittany in 1239–40, Anjou and Maine in 1289, England in 1290, France at various periods from 1182 to 1394, and regions of Germany throughout the fifteenth century. In Spain, where they had experienced a rare golden age, an onslaught took place in 1391, during which synagogues and homes were burned, businesses looted, and many Jews murdered. From then on, Spanish Jews faced increasing hostility until their expulsion in 1492. Nor did the tragedy end there. Still to come were Luther’s tirade against Jews (“their synagogues should be set on fire their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed... they should be deprived of their prayer books and Talmuds” [*Against the Jews and Their Lies*]), the invention of the ghetto (Rome 1555, by edict of Pope Paul IV), and the Chmielnicki pogroms (1648–58), during which as many as 100,000 Jews were slain. The experience of Jews in Christian Europe is one of the tragedies of mankind.

Nor was their experience under Islam an especially happy one. There seems to have been an expectation on the part of the first Muslims that Jews would willingly embrace the new faith, which, like

Christianity, claimed to include and supersede earlier revelations. When this did not happen, reprisals were harsh. Islam began with a massacre of Jews in Medina, and like Christianity incorporated sharply anti-Jewish sentiments into its sacred texts. There were times, especially in its early period of expansion, when tolerance prevailed, though within limits. Jews were given *dhimmi* status as second-class citizens, which meant they had to pay special taxes and wear distinctive clothing (the yellow star Jews were forced to wear in Nazi Europe had its origins in medieval Baghdad). They were banned from government service and from building new houses of worship, and were subject to periodic public humiliations. At times, extreme Islamic sects made life intolerable. In 1066 the Jewish community of Granada was attacked and three thousand were killed. In 1090 the community was assaulted again by an Islamic sect known as the Almoravids, and during the next century it suffered an onslaught from a new group, the Almohads.

There is no doubt, however, that as a whole Jews fared better during the Middle Ages under Muslim rule than under Christian. What was remarkable, however, was how Christian myths that had no salience in Islamic terms were later adopted by Islam to fuel new and essentially alien forms of anti-Jewish hostility. Of these, the most striking is the blood libel. First instigated in Norwich in 1144 and then copied throughout Europe, this tactic accused Jews of killing Christian children to drink or use their blood for ritual purposes. Officially rejected by the Vatican, the myth persisted well into the twentieth century. From the perspective of Judaism, the myth is absurd: the consumption of blood is categorically forbidden. Within Christianity it makes sense: that is what the wine of Communion represents. (The playwright Arnold Wesker wrote a play, called *Blood Libel*, for the 850th anniversary of the event in Norwich, and was kind enough to send me a copy of the script. I read it and asked him why it had no Jewish characters – they were all offstage. He replied that the blood libel was a Christian phenomenon, in which Jews were objects, not participants.) Rooted in Christian theology, the blood libel nonetheless spread to Islam, where it appeared in Aleppo (1811, 1853), Beirut (1824), Antioch (1826), Hama (1829), Tripoli (1834), Dayr al-Qamar (1847), Damanhur (1877), and Damascus (most famously in 1840, but also in 1848 and 1890). In 1983 the Syrian defense minister Mustafa Tlas wrote a book, *The Matzo of Zion*, to prove that the libel was true

("The Jew can kill you and take your blood in order to make his Zionist bread"), and in 1991 the Syrian delegate to the United Nations Human Rights Commission urged its members to read the book, the better to understand the nature of "Zionist racism."

These are devastating chapters in the history of the human spirit. It was no wonder, therefore, that Jews vested immense – in some cases almost messianic – hopes in the Enlightenment, which promised the defeat of prejudice in the name of reason, and a new dawn of tolerance. It did not happen. Early on, there were ominous signs. In the 1750s, Voltaire, the great advocate of liberty, described Jews as "an ignorant and barbarous people, who have long united the most sordid avarice with the most detestable superstition" (*Philosophical Dictionary*), though he was gracious enough to add, "Still, we ought not to burn them." In 1789, as the French National Assembly proclaimed its Declaration of the Rights of Man, anti-Jewish riots broke out in Alsace.

The great philosophers of modernity did not distinguish themselves by their generosity of imagination. Immanuel Kant spoke of Jews as "the vampires of society" and called for the "euthanasia" of Judaism. Fichte argued against giving civil rights to Jews. Hegel took Judaism as his model of a slave morality. Schopenhauer spoke of Jews as "no better than cattle." Nietzsche blamed Judaism for the "falsification" of values. The great logician Gottlob Frege wrote in 1924 that he regarded it as a "misfortune that there are so many Jews in Germany." Martin Heidegger, the greatest German philosopher of the twentieth century, was an enthusiastic member of the Nazi Party who never apologized for his admiration of Hitler or his betrayal of Jewish colleagues. I have seen no adequate account – though this may be my ignorance of the literature – of how it was that philosophy, which carried with it the highest hopes of an age of reason, utterly failed to confront anti-Semitism. Even Jean-Paul Sartre's *Réflexions sur la Question Juive*, written in 1946 after the war, is a deeply flawed work, attributing no independent dignity to Jewish existence (his argument was that Jews do not create anti-Semitism; anti-Semitism creates Jews).

Reviewing this history, it is clear that anti-Semitism is not a unitary phenomenon, a coherent belief or ideology. Jews have been hated because they were rich and because they were poor; because they were

capitalists and because they were communists; because they believed in tradition and because they were rootless cosmopolitans; because they kept to themselves and because they penetrated everywhere. Anti-Semitism is not a belief but a virus. The human body has an immensely sophisticated immune system that develops defenses against viruses. It is penetrated, however, because viruses mutate. Anti-Semitism mutates.

In pre-Christian times it took the relatively simple form of hostility to strangers, a dislike of the *unlike*. In the early Christian centuries it became a religious phenomenon: anti-Judaism. In the Middle Ages it was transmuted into a series of myths whose common theme was that Jews were the cause of all bad things. Following the Enlightenment, religious or mythical justifications were no longer acceptable to secular public discourse, and thus racial anti-Semitism was born (the word "anti-Semitism" itself was coined only in 1879, by the German journalist Wilhelm Marr). The prestige given to prejudice by sacred texts was replaced by the new guarantor of truth: science. A pseudo-science of race was created, designed to prove that Jews were an inferior species. Other quasi-scientific disciplines were enlisted: an anthropology that identified "old" with "primitive"; a Darwinian reading of history that saw "natural selection" as the ruthless elimination of the weak by the strong; and a scientific approach to society (social engineering), including eugenics and other medical ideas, to construct the thought that society could be improved by the surgical removal of "flawed" individuals and groups. If philosophy failed Jews, so did science: there were all too few protests at these insanities. Inevitably, racial anti-Semitism was a more deadly form than any of its predecessors, because whereas religious convictions can be renounced, races can only be exterminated.

It is difficult to know what to say in the face of such evil, for evil it is, regardless of the sanctity or high ideals or pseudo-scientific concepts in which it has been clothed. Heaven alone knows whether Jews have been better or worse than other people, but no people who have ever lived have deserved such hate, such persecution. Nor has it ended.

An autobiographical note: I grew up in Christian Britain and went to Christian schools (in those days, Jewish day schools were rare). I experienced nothing but kindness from my teachers and friends. Those days left an enduring impression on me. They taught me admiration for

a faith that was not and will never be my own. They showed me that deep and abiding tolerance is possible and has surpassing beauty. They helped me form friendships in later life with Christian leaders and others from other faiths – Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Zoroastrian, and Bahai – which I cherish. As a child, when I came to the passage in the Haggada that speaks of hatred through the ages – “It was not only one man that rose up to destroy us” – I felt intuitively that those words referred to an age that had passed. They may have described the experience of my parents’ generation, but not mine. As I grew older, that conviction grew. The Holocaust, I believed, had taught humanity the words “Never again.”

I was wrong. Anti-Semitism in a new and virulent form – now focusing on collective Jewish existence in Israel while also attacking individual Jews and Jewish buildings in the Diaspora – has appeared again. With astonishing speed and ease, it has circumvented the immune systems built up by the West during the course of more than half a century of Holocaust education, interfaith dialogue, and anti-racist legislation. How did it happen?

Viruses are effective when they persuade the body’s immune system that they are part of the body itself. Viruses mutate so as to appear to host cells not as enemies but as friends. So great was the impact of the Holocaust that it rendered certain evils taboo: racism, “ethnic cleansing,” crimes against humanity, and attempted genocide. The only way anti-Semitism could penetrate such defenses was to turn them against Jews. Starting with the infamous 1975 United Nations resolution equating Zionism with racism, it reached a culmination in the United Nations Conference against Racism in Durban in September 2001, in which the State of Israel – the sole democracy in the Middle East – was uniquely accused of each of these evils in turn.

The attempt failed, but the language and narrative were established as acceptable forms of discourse in the public domain. A new myth, as powerful as any of its medieval precursors, was born in which the existence of a Jewish state, however small, became the cause of all international disorder, from the destruction of the World Trade Center less than a week after the Durban conference to the “clash of civilizations” that threatened the twenty-first century’s prospects of peace. Thus racial anti-Semitism mutated into mythological anti-Zionism with the

further rider that all Jews are Zionists and thus legitimate targets of violence. Into this new mold, all the old fantasies of hate, from the blood libel to the late nineteenth century forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, were poured and sprang again into life.

One date links medieval, modern, and postmodern hostility: Pesah itself. Pesah was the favored time for blood libels, for it was said and apparently believed, at least by the masses, that Jews needed blood to make matzot. It was the date chosen by the Nazis for the extermination of the Warsaw ghetto in 1943 (they deliberately chose Jewish holy days for their most brutal murders: this became known as the "Goebbels calendar"). It was the day selected by anti-Israel terrorists in 2002 for the suicide bombing in Netanya in which twenty-nine people were killed and hundreds injured as they prepared to celebrate the seder. There is something about the biblical festival of freedom that outrages those who believe – sometimes in the name of God, sometimes in the name of ethically advanced civilization – that freedom must, by definition, exclude Jews.

Why does anti-Semitism exist? There has been an almost endless set of speculations. Some have seen it in psychological terms: displaced fear, externalization of inner conflict, projected guilt, the creation of a scapegoat. Others have given it a sociopolitical explanation: Jews were a group that could conveniently be blamed for economic resentments, social unrest, class conflict, or destabilizing change. Yet others view it through the prism of culture and identity: Jews were the stereotyped outsiders against whom a group could define itself. There have been voices within Jewish tradition that declare hostility inevitable: "Esau hates Jacob," or "From Sinai, hate (*sin'a*) descended into the world." Yet others, noting the concentration of anti-Semitism among the very faiths – Christianity and Islam – that trace their descent to Abrahamic monotheism, favor a Freudian explanation in terms of the myth of Oedipus: we seek to kill those who gave us birth. It would be strange indeed if so complex a phenomenon did not give rise to multiple explanations.

My own view, though it does not essentially conflict with any of these hypotheses, is that Jews have been hated because they are different. To be sure, every people, race, and faith is different. None, however, has insisted with such tenacity on the right to be different, the duty to be different. Alone among the peoples of the Alexandrian and Roman empires, Jews rose up in rebellion – never on political grounds,

but simply in defense of their right to practice their faith. Almost alone in Christian Europe, they refused to convert (some did; the majority did not) despite the immense pressures placed upon them, sometimes at the cost of life itself. In post-Enlightenment Europe they remained distinctive. They acculturated, integrated, but did not disappear. In the contemporary Middle East, the State of Israel remains an island of Jewish life in an Islamic sea. Jews are different. That, we recall, was Haman's reason for advocating genocide: "There is a certain people, dispersed and scattered among the peoples... whose customs are different from those of all other people" (Est. 3:8). It is one thing to be different and an empire, a civilization, a world power; quite another to be different and a minority, whether in one's own land or in dispersion. Jewish existence raises in its most acute form the problem of difference, and it always has.

There is something unusual, even unique, about the faith of Judaism. It was the world's first monotheism. Abraham, Moses, and the prophets were the first to believe in a single God, creator of heaven and earth, whose authority transcended all earthly powers. Integral to Jewish faith is the proposition that God made (with Noah after the Flood) a covenant with all mankind. It is this covenant, with its insistence on the rule of justice and the sanctity of life, that is the earliest intimation of what today are known as codes of universal human rights (though the Torah itself speaks of commands and prohibitions rather than rights). Yet Judaism itself – the way of the Torah – is not, and was never seen as, a universal code. Instead, through a series of covenants with the patriarchs, and later the Israelites at Mount Sinai, it was the code of a particular people – one people, not all. From this arises the well-known but still remarkable fact that Judaism does not see itself as the only path to God. Malkitzedek, Yitro, and the daughter of Pharaoh who rescued Moses are just three of the figures who, outside the covenant of the Torah, nonetheless come to know and fear God. "The saintly among the nations of the world," said the sages, "have a share in the World to Come" (*Sanhedrin* 105a). The seeming paradox can be stated simply: *the God of Israel is the God of all humanity, but the religion of Israel is not, and is not intended to be, the religion of all humanity*. This is a phenomenon in need of explanation. To understand it is to reach a theological conclusion about anti-Semitism. It is also a vital clue in deciphering the place of Pesah in the worldview of Judaism.

The Torah is about one people, Israel, and its faith, history, and land. Yet it does not begin with one people. It opens instead with humanity as a whole: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Flood. Each represents a universal message. The story of Adam and Eve tells us that, in Rabbi Akiva's words, "Beloved is man, for he was created in the image [of God]" (Mishna *Avot* 3:14). The story of Cain tells us of the universal danger of sibling rivalry, violence, and murder. Noah, after the Flood, represents all humanity in covenant with God. These are the universals of the human condition. Then comes a narrative that marks the transition from the universal (Noah) to the particular (Abraham): the story of Babel. It begins with a dramatic statement: "The entire world had one language with uniform words" (Gen. 11:1). Babel – a reference to the great city-states of Mesopotamia – is a symbol of empire, a single civilization imposed by force on a mass of individuals. Today, historians of the ancient world call this type of civilization "cosmological," meaning that it projected its hierarchy on the heavens. It believed that its social structure mirrored the cosmos. The Torah tells us, without immediately explaining why, that there is something fundamentally wrong with this kind of order. God confuses the speech of Babel's builders and then, in the next chapter, calls on Abraham to make a lonely journey into an unknown future. From then until the end of days there will be no universal language, culture, or civilization. There will indeed be a universal moral code, the code of Noah, but no universal religion.

It is difficult to overestimate the originality and power of this idea. Having made mankind in His image and made a covenant with all humanity, God turns to one individual, one extended family, one people, and asks it to be different, *thereby teaching mankind the dignity of difference*. The word *kadosh*, "holy," in the Torah means just that: different, distinctive, set apart. What is wrong with universal civilizations, the echoes of Babel through the ages, is that they sacrifice the individual to the collective. They make men serve the state instead of making the state serve mankind. They impose an artificial unity on a divinely created diversity. Our humanity exists not despite but precisely because of our individual uniqueness. As the Mishna puts it in one of rabbinic Judaism's most profound teachings, "When a human being makes many coins in the same mint, they all come out the same. God makes every person in the same image – His image – but they are all different" (Mishna *Sanhedrin* 4:6).

Judaism is a particular covenant with the universal God, because it is only in and through our particularity that we are fully human, and it is only through the institutions of particularity – families, communities, languages, and traditions, each with its own local character – that we protect and sustain our humanity.

If Babel is the Bible's first symbol of empire, Egypt is its second. The Egyptians – so the Torah tells us, and so we know from independent sources – feared and despised strangers. At one time they had been conquered by them – the Hyksos. It is no wonder, therefore, that they had negative feelings about the *Ivrim*, the “Hebrews.” The Torah uses a strong word, *to'eva* (abomination, taboo), to describe the Egyptian attitude to nomadic shepherd peoples (Gen. 43:32, 46:34). The opening chapters of the Book of Exodus tell an eminently realistic story about the slow slide from discrimination to persecution to enslavement. The Hebrews were different and thus a threat and therefore to be subject to progressive dehumanization, a pattern that Jews experienced more than once in their subsequent history. The Torah leaves no doubt as to the lesson Israel was to learn from this formative experience, stating it no fewer than thirty-six times: You shall love the stranger, because you know how it feels to be a stranger. You shall protect and respect one who is different, for you, more than any other people on earth, know what it is to be different.

To be a Jew, therefore, from the days of Abraham and Sarah to today, is to carry the burden and dignity of difference. Jews never built an empire. They never sought to become a world power, imposing their culture on others. Though the prophets foresaw the day when all mankind would worship the One God, they never envisioned a time when the nations would adopt Israel's covenant, the Torah. The task of the people of the covenant – set out in God's first call to Abraham – is to be true to its own faith while contributing to the good of others: “through you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). Abraham fights and prays on behalf of the people of the cities of the plain, though their faith is not his. The biblical *ger toshav*, the non-Jew living within Israel's jurisdiction, has equal rights merely by adopting the universal (Noahide) code, not by embracing the covenant of Israel. Judaism accepts converts; it does not seek them. In charging Israel to be the exemplar of the dignity of difference, therefore, God posed two challenges: one to

Israel, the other to the nations of the world. For Israel, the question has always been: do we have the courage to be different? For the nations it has been: do we make space for difference? The failure of the first leads to assimilation; of the second, to anti-Semitism.

Jews have been persecuted because they are different. Under the Alexandrian and Roman empires they resisted Hellenization. Under medieval Christianity and Islam they refused conversion. Under nineteenth century European nationalism they remained a distinctive group. During each of these five civilizations they sought no special rights except the right to be themselves, true to the faith of their ancestors. At each stage, some Jews defected. Most stayed loyal. Their vision was simple, best expressed in the words of the prophet Micah:

Every man will sit under his own vine and his own fig tree,
And no one will make them afraid,
For the Lord Almighty has spoken.
All the nations will walk, each in the name of its god;
We will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.
(4:4-5)

I know of no spiritual vision truer to the nature of this created world, with its multiplicity of faiths, languages, and cultures; none more generous in its understanding of the myriad forms of the human quest for God; none more vigilant in defense of the particular, the local, the relationships in which our humanity is expressed through covenants of love rather than the coercive force of power. Anti-Semitism – the paradigm case of the hatred of difference – is more than an assault against Jews. It is a flawed understanding, catastrophic in its consequences, of what it is to be human.

If I am right, three conclusions follow: one for Jews, a second for anti-Semites, a third for humanity as a whole.

For Jews, the response to anti-Semitism must be to fight it but never to internalize it or accept it on its own terms. Racial anti-Semitism, product of a late nineteenth century Europe that saw itself as the summit of civilization, eventually cost the lives of six million Jews. But it left another, less visible scar. One mistake made by good, honorable,

and reflective Jews was to believe that since Jews were the objects of anti-Semitism, they were also its cause. They argued that since Jews were hated because they were different, they should try, as much as they could, not to be different. Some converted; others assimilated; yet others reformulated Judaism to eliminate as far as possible all that made Jews and Judaism distinctive. When these attempts failed – as they did, not only in nineteenth-century France, Germany, and Austria but also in fifteenth-century Spain – some internalized the failure. Thus was born the tortured psychology known as Jewish self-hatred: the result of Jews' ceasing to define themselves as a nation loved by God and instead seeing themselves as the people hated by gentiles. It was a tragic error. Anti-Semitism is not caused by Jews; they are merely its targets. We now know that there can be anti-Semitism in countries where there are no Jews at all. Hatred is something that can happen to us, but it is not who we are. It can never be the basis of an identity.

One episode, told by a rabbinic colleague, has long lingered in my mind. It took place in Russia in the early 1990s, following the collapse of communism. For the first time in seventy years, Jews were free to live openly as Jews, but at the same time anti-Semitic attitudes, long suppressed, came to the surface. A British rabbi had gone there to help with the reconstruction of Jewish life, and was one day visited by a young lady in distress. "All my life," she said, "I hid the fact that I was a Jew, and no one ever commented on my Jewishness. Now, though, when I walk past, my neighbors mutter, 'Zhid (Jew).' What shall I do?" The rabbi replied, "If you had not told me you were Jewish, I would never have known. But with my hat and beard, no one could miss the fact that I am a Jew. Yet, in all the months I have been here, no one has shouted, 'Zhid!' at me. Why do you think that is?" The girl was silent for a moment and then said, "Because they know that if they shout 'Zhid!' at me, I will take it as an insult, but if they shout 'Zhid!' at you, you will take it as a compliment." That is a deep insight. Beyond eternal vigilance, the best way for Jews to combat anti-Semitism is to wear their identity with pride.

To anti-Semites, we must say this: we will never return hate with hate. To be a Jew is to work for peace and justice; revenge belongs to God, not us. Yet there is a truth that must also be spoken, namely that anti-Semitism is a profound psychological dysfunction, a disease masquerading as a cure. When bad things happen to a person or group, there

are two questions they can ask: "How can I put it right?" or "Who did this to me?" Asking the first defines me as a subject, a moral agent, a responsible self. Asking the second identifies me as an object, a victim; and a victim can feel only resentment and rage.

There is an immense appeal to the culture of victimhood. It wins sympathy and the suspension of moral judgment. Its cost, however, is higher still, for defining oneself as a victim – anti-Semites always do – involves the systematic denial of responsibility. Dostoevsky once wrote that "If God does not exist, all is permitted" (*Crime and Punishment*). That is untrue. But if *responsibility* does not exist, then all is permitted; and few phenomena have relieved more people of more responsibility than the mythical belief that there exists a group responsible for all the evils in the world, and the simultaneous knowledge, at some other level of consciousness, that it is in fact so vulnerable that it can be attacked with impunity.

It is no accident that throughout history, and no less so today, anti-Semitism has been the weapon of choice of tyrants, dictators, holders of nondemocratic power, and rulers of totalitarian states. It appeals because it deflects public unrest at hunger, poverty, ignorance, disease, economic inequalities, bribery, corruption, and denial of human rights. It redirects indignation from its proper object to a mythical enemy charged with supernatural powers to control the world. That is why those who care for freedom, democracy, and the rule of law must never cease to remind us that in the long run anti-Semitism harms those who practice it no less than those against whom it is practiced. The culture of victimhood, so fashionable today, never liberates, but only perpetuates the condition of the victim.

To humanity, the argument must be simple and direct. Anti-Semitism – the hatred of difference – is an assault not on Jews only but on the human condition. Life is sacred because each person – even genetically identical twins – is different, therefore irreplaceable and non-substitutable. Every language, culture, and civilization (provided that it satisfies the minimum conditions of a universal moral code) has its own integrity, and because each is different, each adds something unique to the collective heritage of mankind. Cultural diversity is as essential to our social ecology as biodiversity is to our natural ecology. A world without room for Jews is one that has no room for difference, and a world that lacks space for difference lacks space for humanity itself.