

ISRAEL Teaching Letter

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A NEW LOOK AT AN ANCIENT EVIL



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A NEW LOOK AT AN ANCIENT EVIL

BLOCK - A

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The entrance to
cells in Block A of
the Theresienstadt
Concentration
Camp

We live in a day when scholars and political leaders the world over are re-examining anti-Semitism. Many believe it needs to be redefined, new parameters set, new lines drawn. In some cases, the outcome has been positive for the Jewish people, but for the most part, the message to the world is clear: anti-Semitism, though an unfortunate phenomenon, is no different than any other form of racism. The Holocaust, we are told, was a genocide like all other genocides that happened throughout history. We are even hearing the word holocaust applied to other modern situations such as the holocaust of abortion, and even a so-called “holocaust” faced by the Palestinian people.

There is no doubt that evil and hatred are rampant in today's world. Few Christians would deny that abortion is a reprehensible atrocity. And there certainly exist many ethnic groups around the world that have faced the unspeakable horrors of genocide. But, be not fooled; anti-Semitism is unique in its evil, and perhaps it is time that we, as Christians, take a new look at it as well. The great Jewish sage Rashi points out four areas that clearly define the uniqueness of the hatred for the Jewish people:

1. **Longevity**—Certainly various groups have suffered persecution throughout their history, the horrors of their mistreatment often ebbing and flowing and eventually disappearing from the world stage. However, we can trace the beginnings of anti-Semitism to the book of Genesis and follow its thread throughout the entire history of the Jewish people.

2. **Universality**—Other ethnic groups have suffered horrendous persecution in their countries or the countries of their dispersion, but the Jewish people have suffered at the hands of anti-Semites everywhere on the face of the earth that their historical journey has taken them.

3. **Intensity**—Again, human bigotry has periodically erupted in violent persecution, even rape and murder. No one would deny or demean the suffering of minorities throughout history at the hands of oppressors. However, anti-Semitism has repeatedly expressed itself in a particularly virulent manner: the Inquisition, European pogroms and the Holocaust being only a few examples.

4. **Confusion**—Surprisingly, there is precious little agreement around the world as to why the Jews are hated. Money, land, power, the need for labor—the typical justifications given for persecution and oppression throughout the ages, have historically had nothing to do with the worldwide, millennia-long hatred of the Jewish people.



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Shoes belonging to the Jewish people killed in Auschwitz Concentration Camp

DESIGNED TO REFLECT GOD'S CHARACTER

So what is really at the heart of this irrational hatred? I think we can begin to find the answer in the *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.). In the Jewish Publication Society's translation of Exodus 28:2, Moses tells the Israelites that they are to “*make vestments of sanctity for Aaron your brother for glory and splendor.*”

In the New King James version of the Bible, the Hebrew word *kavod* which means honor or reverence is translated glory while *tipheret*, meaning beauty, is rendered splendor. Clearly these “vestments of sanctity” are to be a reflection of God Himself. Then follows a list of instructions, laying out in the minutest of detail, every aspect of creating these garments. Style, design, fabric, thread, color, weaving, sizes, adornments...nothing is left to the imagination.

Once they know how to make the individual pieces, they are told, again in specific detail, how to assemble them. That is followed by instructions for the bathing and anointing of Aaron and his sons to prepare them to actually wear the garments.

Then, the Israelites are instructed in carefully dressing the priests in their new outfits. And finally, a plan is given for the ceremony by which Aaron and his sons would be formally ordained into the priesthood.

And through it all, several words are repeated. Sanctity, holy, holiness, hallow, consecrate, sanctify...words that have a variety of meanings in English. However, in Hebrew, they share a common theme at their root: being separate, being called out, being different, apartness. They appear at least 40 times in the short discussion of the priesthood found in Exodus 28:2 through 30:10. Clearly, God is passionate that those who would serve in His Tabernacle and later His Temple be a holy, or separated people, sanctified, or called out, to be His and His alone.

In reading the rest of the Bible, it is equally clear that His desire was for all of Israel to be set apart as a nation of priests. In the Writings of the Apostles, Paul says the same thing about those who are followers of Yeshua. He calls them a peculiar people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, set apart for His service.





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...SET APART AS A
light to the nations,
REFLECTING THE GLORY AND
SPLENDOR OF THE LORD...

SET APART FOR A PURPOSE

The Jewish people were set apart from all other nations for very specific purposes, which also bear some re-examination.

1. They were set apart to carry the mantle of monotheism throughout history, and they have done so bravely to the benefit of all who love the God of Israel. However, in many churches today, the message of monotheism is being sacrificed on the altar of political correctness, and we are left with the sense that there are several “small ‘g’ gods” on one side, and another “small ‘g’ god” on the other. Nothing could be further from the truth! We must not lose sight of that incredible, awesome “capital ‘G’ God” of Israel who desires real relationship with His people, but makes moral demands on mankind.

2. They were set apart as a light to the nations, reflecting the glory and splendor of the Lord and shining forth with the joy of covenant relationship. Unfortunately, many in the ancient world, much like today, preferred darkness. They resented the moral imperative and wanted to hide from the light.

3. They were set apart to bring a message of goodness—the goodness of God, yes, but more than that. They exemplified the requirement of goodness that God placed on a humanity that was predisposed to bad-ness. But in so

doing, He promised to teach, lead, guide, instruct His people, and empower them through His Holy Spirit, so that they could meet that requirement and live lives of goodness. But the call to absolute morality hung like a dark cloud over the heads of those surrounding pagan cultures...much like today.

A REVOLUTIONARY MESSAGE

When the Jewish people entered the religious arena of their day, they brought a new and revolutionary message. Your pagan gods, it said, are worthless, powerless and no match for the one true God! He is invisible, yes, but infinite, invincible and perfect in every way. This God says that infanticide (the sacrifice of children) and human sacrifice in general, rituals that were an integral part of the pagan worship of the day, are absolutely unacceptable.

And for a very specific reason. This God says that every human being, whether male or female, rich or poor, black or white, slave or free, is created in His image and therefore bears within himself a divine spark. And therefore, no one should make the decision to simply live his life as he pleases. Each man and woman is responsible to all other men and women to surrender their lives to the will of that higher authority. All should bear the responsibility of spreading the goodness, of caring for one another, of serving others and not themselves, all to the honor of that one amazing, infinite God.

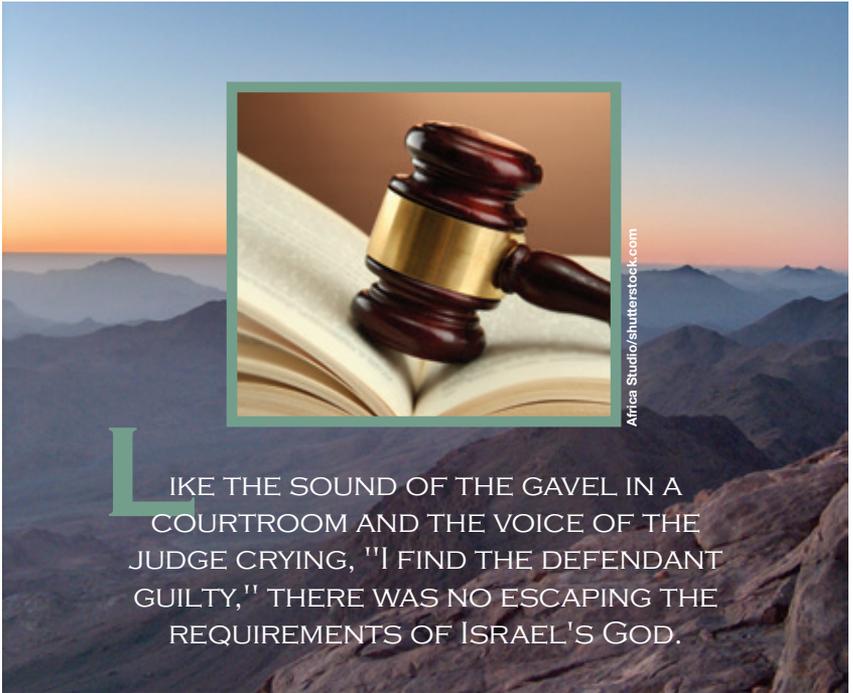
What a remarkable message: one God, one way; absolute right and absolute wrong; absolute good and absolute evil.

What a conviction to those who loved darkness and hated the light. What an accusation against those who sacrificed their children to pagan gods and participated with temple prostitutes. And what a conundrum.

I believe that at a certain level, deep inside where that divine spark dwells, people then (as well as now) recognized the truth of the message brought to the world by the Jewish people. And once they heard it, they had to decide what to do with it. If they were unwilling to embrace it, they had to handle it in some other way. We have a saying in America, "shoot the messenger." And that is unfortunately the path that was chosen.



Greek god, Pan



LIKE THE SOUND OF THE GAVEL IN A COURTROOM AND THE VOICE OF THE JUDGE CRYING, "I FIND THE DEFENDANT GUILTY," THERE WAS NO ESCAPING THE REQUIREMENTS OF ISRAEL'S GOD.

Destroy them; obliterate the Jewish people because their message is too potent, too powerful to be ignored. It's not like other ideologies that can be taken lightly or laughed off. It is deep, soul-wrenching truth that demands some kind of reaction. And by their very existence, the Jewish people became a living, breathing condemnation, a constant reminder of the sin of mankind and the need for repentance. Like a spiritual finger constantly pointing, they convicted those around them; like the sound of the gavel in a courtroom and the voice of the judge crying, "I find the defendant guilty," there was no escaping the requirements of Israel's God. Such spiritual upheaval engendered the hatred that today we call anti-Semitism.

The *Talmud* (rabbinic commentary on Jewish tradition and the Hebrew Scriptures) speaks often of anti-Semitism and cites its source through a unique play on words. Sinai, it says, is the place where the Jewish people received the message of God's love, values and moral standards. It is the place from which the light of *Torah* emanated. And it is very similar to another Hebrew word, *sinah*, which means hatred.

It was because Sinai emanated the message of one God who makes moral demands on mankind that hatred emanated from there as well. The Jewish people became the target of those whose strongest desire it is to liberate mankind from his own conscience.

The *Talmud* asks, "Why was the Torah given on a mountain called Sinai?" And it answers, "Because the great *sinah* emanated from there as well."

Memorial for Margot and Anne Frank at the Bergen Belsen Concentration Camp site



www.wikipedia.org/Arme List

The great *sinah*...intense hatred typified by the emotions of jealousy and guilt.

That specific brand of hatred has been directed only at God's people. The nation of Israel is unique among the nations of the earth, beautiful and precious... like God's hand-written love letter to the world. He calls them his *segulah*, his very special treasure.

And it is because of that special calling, that special relationship with Him that they have been hounded, assaulted, murdered and chased from nation to nation virtually throughout their entire history.

"WE WILL ALWAYS REMAIN JEWS"

It is interesting that scholars today are re-examining anti-Semitism and asking, "Why the Jews?" when a young girl like Anne Frank knew the answer. She wrote in her diary on April 11, 1944:

"Who knows—it might even be our religion from which the world and all peoples learn good—for that reason and that reason alone, we do now suffer. We can never become just English—or just Netherlanders—or representatives of any other country for that matter. We will always remain Jews."

Unfortunately, as long as that remains true, the lovers of darkness will continue in their determination to rid the world of the Jewish people.

Anne Frank realized that anti-Semitism is really a hatred of Jewishness, a hatred of the message. It does not exist because the Jewish people are smart or are dumb; because they are lazy or are ambitious; are clever or are dull; are rich or are poor. It exists simply because they are.

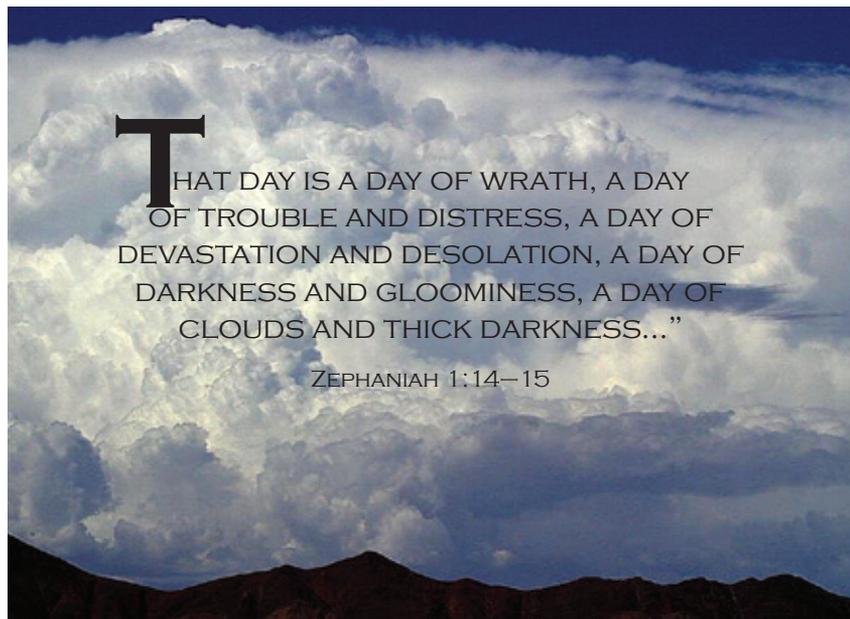
ANTI-SEMITISM ON THE RISE

That hatred continues to this very moment to threaten their existence. Recent reports indicate that anti-Semitism is on the rise all over the globe, even in countries where experts did not anticipate it. The Ukraine today is believed to be home to about 71,000 Jewish people. However, some experts believe there may be as many as 225,000 living within Ukrainian borders. The nation is currently on fire, facing social upheaval, and political and economic crises. In the midst of it, the anti-Semites are raising their voices and blaming all of the ills of the country on the Jewish people.

Leaflets are being distributed, purportedly by the Orthodox Church, claiming that there is a Jewish conspiracy to kill Christian children through poison vaccinations and calling for people to buy guns and kill the “Yids,” assuring them that the Bible says it is the right thing to do. This is rhetoric unlike anything seen in that part of the world since the days of World War II. Further, the Ukrainian government is purportedly considering legislation that would mark all of those who are helping the Jewish people as enemies of the state. Regardless of the origin of such material, the vitriolic content is flaming fires of anti-Semitism long present in the Ukraine.

Right now, our Project Rescue office in the Ukraine is receiving hundreds of requests for assistance from Jewish people who are terrified for their lives and the lives of their children. They are desperate to make *aliyah* (immigration to Israel), and we must be there to help them. For centuries, Christians have repeatedly let the Jewish people down during their times of greatest need. I believe this is an opportunity for us to do it right! And we must not fail.

THE [UKRAINE] IS CURRENTLY ON FIRE, FACING SOCIAL UPHEAVAL, AND POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CRISES. IN THE MIDST OF IT, THE ANTI-SEMITES ARE RAISING THEIR VOICES AND BLAMING ALL OF THE ILLS OF THE COUNTRY ON THE JEWISH PEOPLE.



www.wikipedia.org/Jon Sullivan

THAT DAY IS A DAY OF WRATH, A DAY OF TROUBLE AND DISTRESS, A DAY OF DEVASTATION AND DESOLATION, A DAY OF DARKNESS AND GLOOMINESS, A DAY OF CLOUDS AND THICK DARKNESS...”

ZEPHANIAH 1:14–15

DISCERNING THE TIMES AND SEASONS

In the Writings of the Apostles, Paul speaks to his spiritual son Timothy. The letters were written during a time of great danger, both for the Jewish people and for the newly formed group that believed in Yeshua as Messiah, still called the Sect of the Nazarene, but later to be called Christians. Probably written sometime after Emperor Nero began his campaign of persecution, Paul is speaking about hardships that Timothy may well face, but he is also speaking prophetically to future generations that would read the letters. Yeshua himself had predicted that difficult times would come upon the earth, and Paul spoke several times of the “end of days.” Although he did not live to see them, Paul’s words have echoed through the generations, calling Christians to be alert and ready for whatever the future might bring.

*“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come; for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, **unholy**, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, **despisers [haters] of good**, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...”* (2 Tim. 3:2–4 emphasis added).

Again in his letter to the newly formed church in Thessalonica, Paul spends considerable time discussing the end of days, echoing the words of Joel, Amos, Zephaniah, Isaiah and Zechariah, all prophets of Israel—*“The great day of the LORD is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness...”* (Zeph. 1:14–15).

*“But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night...then sudden destruction comes upon them as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are **not in darkness** so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. **You are all sons of the light and sons of the day...** We **are not of the night or of the darkness**. Therefore...let us watch and be sober [let us be sober and vigilant...]” (1 Thess. 5:1–6 emphasis added).*

Clearly Paul expects that Christians will be carefully discerning the times and seasons, unsurprised by the evils that will come upon the earth and fully prepared to conduct themselves in a manner that brings honor to the God of Israel.

I suggest that the kind of anti-Semitism that sent millions of Jewish people to the gas chambers and is threatening the lives of Jewish people in the Ukraine and around the world at this very moment in history, is the ultimate indication that we are nearing the days the Apostle spoke of.

CALLED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Yeshua Himself said, *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends”* (John 15:13). Our workers in the Ukraine are at this very moment laying their lives on the line to help as many Jewish people as possible make their way from the violence to safety in Israel. We have no idea how long it will be before that door is closed.

You may not be called upon to physically lay down your life as they are, but there is much that you can do, wherever you might be on the globe.

1. Pray that the God of Israel will be recognized and honored as He moves on Israel’s behalf.
2. I can’t stress enough how important it is for Christians around the world to be praying for the Jewish people, for our Christian workers in the Ukraine who are now also at tremendous risk, and against the spirit of anti-Semitism that is sweeping the globe.



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3. If we are to see a massive increase in *aliyah* in the coming year, it is imperative that Bridges for Peace is ready. We must have the staff and the resources to keep our promise of friendship and assistance to the Jewish people. So beyond praying, Christians must give generously to save the lives of God's *segulah*, and further to help us meet their needs once they arrive in Israel. Tell the story, inform your friends, family, congregation and community. And remind them that blessing awaits those who bless Israel! "*I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*" (Gen. 12:3).

4. We must also pray that the Church will open its heart to the call of God to support Israel. Although many Christians have become Israel supporters over the past decade or so, there remain millions worldwide who are ambivalent, uneducated or downright anti-Semitic. Pray that Christians will rise up as one united body, dedicated to being real friends of the Jewish people. Simply because they are.

By Rev. Cheryl Hauer
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Scripture is taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

Bridges for Peace is a Jerusalem-based, Bible-believing Christian organization supporting Israel and building relationships between Christians and Jews worldwide through education and practical deeds expressing God's love and mercy.



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