



# BEHAALOTECHA

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS AN ANTISEMITE

*They Really Hate G-d, Not Us*

# PARSHAH OVERVIEW

## *Behaalotecha*

Aaron is commanded to raise light in the lamps of the *menorah*, and the tribe of Levi is initiated into the service in the Sanctuary.

A “second Passover” is instituted in response to the petition, “Why should we be deprived?” by a group of Jews who were unable to bring the Passover offering in its appointed time because they were ritually impure. G-d instructs Moses on the procedures for Israel’s journeys and encampments in the desert, and the people journey in formation from Mount Sinai, where they had

been camped for nearly a year. The people are dissatisfied with their “bread from Heaven” (the manna), and demand that Moses supply them with meat. Moses appoints seventy elders, to whom he imparts of his spirit, to assist him in the burden of governing the people. Miriam speaks negatively of Moses and is punished with leprosy; Moses prays for her healing, and the entire community waits seven days for her recovery.

Why does antisemitism persist? What's the real reason behind all the hatred?



# TEXT 1

Numbers 10:35

וַיְהִי בְּנִסְעַי הָאָרוֹן וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה, קוּמָה ה' וַיִּפְצוּ  
אֹיְבָיֶיךָ וַיָּנֶסוּ מִשְׂנְאֵיֶיךָ מִפְּנֵיֶיךָ.

So it was, whenever the ark set out, Moses would say, “Arise, O L-rd, and may Your foes be scattered, and may those who hate You flee from You.”

## TEXT 2

*Rabbi Yechiel Heilprin,  
Erkei Hakinuyim, "Sonei"*

שונא - בלב ואיננו מגלה לזולתו, אויב - מגלה השנאה . . .  
אויב - מבקש רעתו, שונא - שמח ברעתו ואינו עושה לו,  
אלא נוטר השנאה בלבו.

A *sonei* is one who harbors hatred in their heart and does not reveal it. An *oyev* reveals their hatred. . . .

An *oyev* actively seeks to harm their enemy; a *sonei* rejoices when their enemy is harmed but doesn't necessarily actively do harm. Instead, they guard the hatred in their heart.

שונא—Hater

AN IDEOLOGICAL ENEMY



אויב—Foe

A PRACTICAL ENEMY



## QUESTION

Who would be considered a *sonoi* of G-d?  
Who obsessively hates and fights against  
G-d on an ideological level?

# TEXT 3

*Rashi, Numbers 10:35*

"מִשְׂנֵאֵיךָ". אֵלוֹ שׁוֹנְאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, שְׂכָל הַשׁוֹנְאֵי אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל  
שׁוֹנְאֵי אֶת מִי שְׂאָמַר וְהָיָה הָעוֹלָם, שְׂנֵאָמַר: "וּמִשְׂנֵאֵיךָ נִשְׂאוּ  
רֹאשׁ" (תְּהִלִּים פג, ג), וּמִי הֵם? "עַל עֲמָךְ יַעֲרִימוּ סוֹד"  
(שָׁם, ד).

“Those who hate You.” Meaning, those who hate the people of Israel, for anyone who hates the people of Israel hates the One Who spoke and the world came into being, as it says, “Those who hate You have raised their heads.” Who are “those who hate You”? Those who, as the verse continues, “plot deviously against Your nation” (Psalms 83:4).





ANSWER

Jew Hatred

=

G-d Hatred

# TEXT 4

*Cornelius Tacitus, The Histories, Book V, 3–5, Loeb Classical Library Edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931), pp. 179–183*

Once during a plague in Egypt which caused bodily disfigurement, King Bocchoris approached the oracle of Ammon and asked for a remedy, whereupon he was told to purge his kingdom and to transport this race into other lands, since it was hateful to the gods.

So the Hebrews were searched out and gathered together; then, being abandoned in the desert, while all others lay idle and weeping, one only of the exiles, Moses by name, warned them not to hope for help from gods or men, for they were deserted by both, but to trust to themselves. . . .

The Jews regard as profane all that we hold sacred; on the other hand, they permit all that we abhor. . . . They first chose to rest on the seventh day, . . . but after a time they were led by the charms of indolence to give over the seventh year as well to inactivity. . . .

# TEXT 4

*Cornelius Tacitus, The Histories, Book V, 3–5, Loeb Classical Library Edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931), pp. 179–183*

The other customs of the Jews are base and abominable, and owe their persistence to their depravity. For the worst rascals among other peoples, renouncing their ancestral religions, always kept sending tribute and contributions to Jerusalem, thereby increasing the wealth of the Jews.

Again, the Jews are extremely loyal toward one another, and always ready to show compassion, but toward every other people they feel only hate and enmity.

# TEXT 5

*Rabbi Menachem Ziemba,  
Chidushei HaGarmaz no.  
48*

יִשְׁנֶם אֲנָשִׁים הַחוֹשְׁבִים וּמְנַסִּים לְמַצּוֹא אֶת  
הַגִּימוֹקִים וְהַסִּיבוֹת לְשִׁנְאָתָם שֶׁל הַגּוֹיִים  
כְּלַפֵּי הַיְהוּדִים. אוּלַם הַמְצִיאוֹת הוֹכִיחָה כִּי  
אֵין אֶף סִבָּה אַחַת נְכוֹנָה, שִׁנְאָה זֹה הִיא חֲסֵרֶת  
כָּל סִיבָה וְכָל גִּימוֹק, אֲלֵא רַק הַפֶּה לְבָם  
לְשִׁנוֹא עֲמוֹ.

כֵּאֵן שׁוֹנְאִים אֶת הַיְהוּדִים עַל שׁוֹם שְׂהֵם  
קַפִּיטְלִיסְטִים, וְשֵׁם עַל שׁוֹם שְׂהֵם  
סוֹצִיאֲלִיסְטִים. כֵּאֵן עַל שׁוֹם זְרִיזִים  
וּפְקָחִים יִתֵּר עַל הַמִּיֶּדָה, וְשֵׁם עַל שׁוֹם שְׂהֵם  
מְהוּוִים מְעַמְסָה מְבִלִי לְהַבִּיא כָּל תּוֹעֵלָת. כֵּאֵן  
עַל שׁוֹם שְׂהֵם חֲרָדִים וְקַנְאִים יִתֵּר עַל הַמִּיֶּדָה,  
וְשֵׁם עַל שְׂהֵם מְתַקְדָּמִים וּמְפִיצִים דְּעוֹת  
חֲלוּנִיּוֹת.

כִּי תִמִּיד סוֹתְרִים הַגִּימוֹקִים זֶה אֶת זֶה, לְלֵא  
קוֹרְטוֹב שֶׁל הַגִּיוֹן וְשִׁיקוּל דְּעַת.

There are those who seek to identify legitimate causes for the hatred of Jews. However, reality has shown that there is no legitimate reason. Antisemitism has no justifiable cause. The haters simply choose to hate G-d's people.

This is demonstrated by the fact that Jews are hated for being capitalists—and also for being socialists. They are hated because they are overly ambitious and sharp-minded—and also because they are burdensome and parasitic. They are hated because they are too religious and conservative—and also because they advance progressive and secular ideas.

The reasons for this hatred are consistently contradictory and have not an ounce of logic behind them.



German antisemitic poster, 1943: “The war is his fault!”

There's no logical reasoning behind antisemitism.

# TEXT 6

*Midrash, Eichah Rabah  
3:41*

חד יהודאי עבר קדם אדריאנוס  
ושאל בשלמיה, אמר ליה: מאן  
את?

אמר ליה: יהודאי.

אמר ליה: ואית יהודאי עבר קדם  
אדריאנוס ושאל בשלמיה? אמר:  
איזילו וסבו ראשיה!

עבר אחרון, חמא מה איעביד  
בקדמיה ולא שאל בשלמיה. אמר  
ליה: מאן את?

אמר ליה: יהודאי.

A Jew passed before Hadrian  
and greeted him. The emperor  
asked him, “Who are you?”

He answered, “A Jew.”

He said, “A Jew should pass  
before Hadrian and greet him?!  
Take him and cut off his head!”

Another Jew was passing by  
and, seeing what had  
happened, did not greet the  
emperor. The emperor asked  
him, “Who are you?”

He answered, “A Jew.”



# TEXT 6

*Midrash, Eichah Rabah  
3:41*

אָמַר לִיה: וְאֵית יְהוּדָאֵי עֶבֶר קָדָם  
אֲדַרְיָאנוּס וְלֹא שְׂאֵל בְּשַׁלְמִיָּה?  
אָמַר לִיה: אֵיזִילוּ וְסִבּוּ רִישֵׁיהּ!

אָמְרוּ לִיה סְנַקְלִיטִין שְׁלוּ: לִית  
אַנּוּ יְדַעִין מָה אֵילִין עוֹבְדֵי דְאַתָּ  
עֶבֶיד, דְשְׂאֵיל בְּשַׁלְמָךְ מִיתְקַטִּיל,  
דְלֹא שְׂאֵיל בְּשַׁלְמָךְ מִתְקַטִּיל.

אָמַר לְהוֹן: וְאַתּוֹן בְּעֵיִן מְלָכָה יְתִי  
אֵיךְ אֲנָא בְּעֵי לְמַקְטֵלָה בְּשַׁנְאֵי?

He said, “A Jew should pass before Hadrian and not greet him?! Take him and cut off his head!”

His senators said to him, “We don’t know what you are doing. One was killed for greeting you; one was killed for not greeting you.”

He replied, “You want to tell the king what to do about those he hates?!”

# TEXT 7

*Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, "Future Tense—The New Antisemitism: What Is It and How Do We Deal with It?" The Jewish Chronicle, November 1, 2007*

Antisemitism is not an ideology, a coherent set of beliefs. It is, in fact, an endless stream of contradictions. The best way of understanding it is to see it as a virus. Viruses attack the human body, but the body itself has an immensely sophisticated defense, the human immune system. How then do viruses survive and flourish? By mutating. Antisemitism mutates, and in so doing, defeats the immune systems set up by cultures to protect themselves against hatred. . . . Most people at most times feel a residual guilt at hating the innocent. Therefore antisemitism has always had to find legitimation in the most prestigious source of authority at any given time.





# TEXT 7

*Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, "Future Tense—The New Antisemitism: What Is It and How Do We Deal with It?" The Jewish Chronicle, November 1, 2007*

In the first centuries of the Common Era, and again in the Middle Ages, this was religion. That is why Judeophobia took the form of religious doctrine. In the nineteenth century, religion had lost prestige, and the supreme authority was now science. Racial antisemitism was duly based on two pseudo-sciences: social Darwinism (the idea that in society, as in nature, the strong survive by eliminating the weak), and the so-called scientific study of race.

By the late twentieth century, science had lost its prestige, having given us the power to destroy life on earth. Today the supreme source of legitimacy is human rights. That is why Jews (or the Jewish state) are accused of the five primal sins against human rights: racism, apartheid, ethnic cleansing, attempted genocide and crimes against humanity.

## QUESTION

If there is no identifiable justification for antisemitism, why does it exist? What is the real reason antisemites hate Jews?

# TEXT 8

*Rabbi Ben Tzion Shafier,  
“Why We Hate the Jews,”  
Torah.org*

The pattern that emerges is that there is no logical reason for antisemitism until you focus on the real cause—that the Jew represents Hashem. We are Hashem’s people. When the gentile looks at a Jew, he sees Hashem, and that image is not always attractive to him.

# TEXT 9

*Midrash, Bamidbar Rabah*  
*22:2*

אָמַר מֹשֶׁה: רַבּוֹן הָעוֹלָמִים! אִם הָיִינוּ עַרְלִים אוֹ עוֹבְדֵי  
עֲבוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים אוֹ כּוֹפְרֵי מִצְוֹת, לֹא הָיוּ שׁוֹנְאֵין אוֹתָנוּ  
וְאֵינָן רוֹדְפֵין אַחֲרֵינוּ, אֶלָּא בְּשִׁבִיל תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת שֶׁנָּתַתָּ לָנוּ.

Said Moses, “Master of the universe, had we been gentiles, idol worshippers, or deniers of the *mitzvot*, they would neither hate us nor persecute us. It is only on account of the Torah and *mitzvot* that you gave us [that they hate us].”

ANSWER

Antisemitism is  
a mask for an  
underlying hatred  
toward G-d.



# TEXT 10

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 23, p. 78*

אויף דעם ענטפערט רש"י: "משנאיך — אלו שונאי ישראל": מיט "משנאיך" (בכל מקום) ווערט געמיינט שונאי ישראל; דאס הייסט, א שנאה כבושה בלב צו "מי שאמר והיה העולם" איז טאקע ניט שייד, אבער די וואס זיינען "שונא את ישראל", די וואס האבן א שנאה כבושה צו אידן (ווי רש"י האט שוין געבראכט בפירושו "הלכה היא בידוע שעשו שונא ליעקב"), זיינען זיי בדרך ממילא "שונא את מי שאמר והיה העולם".

Rashi explains that "those who hate You" means "those who hate the people of Israel." Because a deep-seated hatred of "the One Who spoke and the world came into being" is indeed not prevalent, but "those who hate the people of Israel" automatically hate "the One Who spoke and the world came into being."

# TEXT 11A

*Rabbi Elisha Greenbaum,  
"There's No Such Thing as  
an Anti-Semite,"  
Chabad.org*

The age-old struggle between Jew and Jew-hater is a misnomer. I remember, visiting the Nazi death-camp Dachau, how infuriating it was to see at the crematoria the large placard dedicating the site "to those who died in the fight against Nazism." The memorial might be somewhat appropriate for the political opponents of the regime who suffered and died there, but my grandfather's uncle, cousins and thousands of other martyrs didn't die fighting anything. Far as they were concerned, they were happy to lead private lives before Hitler and his henchmen came looking for them. To term it a "struggle" between innocent victim and executioner is as inappropriate as describing modern-day society's effort to protect themselves from suicide bombers a "cycle of violence."

The struggle is not between our enemies and ourselves. Rather G-d's antagonists attack us as the pawns in their battle against righteousness and G-dliness. Jew-hatred is so engrained and pervasive that no logical or rational explanation for the phenomenon can possibly be attached, other than to define it as the wicked man's eternal struggle against Divinity.

# TEXT 11B

*Rabbi Elisha Greenbaum,  
ibid.*

If they're not fighting us but fighting G-d, our only viable response is to live and act like Jews no matter the provocation. When it becomes apparent that their hatred towards us is predicated on our special relationship with G-d, then it becomes G-d's responsibility to defend Himself from His opponents and enemies and come to our rescue, freeing us to resume our historic mission of representing G-dliness to the world.





Our connection to G-d protects us from antisemitism because those who oppose us are, in reality, adversaries of G-d. He defends Himself against them, which, in turn, protects us.

# TEXT 12

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 23, pp. 79–80*

און דערפאר קומט די ישועה (ניט אזוי  
מצד מעלת העבודה פון אידן, נאר) מצד  
דעם וואס אן אויב ושונא פון אידן איז —  
"אויביך" און "משנאיך". אין אנדערע  
ווערטער: אויב אומות העולם וועלן זען אז  
זיי קענען זיך טשעפען רחמנא ליצלן מיט  
אידן — וואס אידן זיינען דאך דער "עם  
סגולה" — און דער אויבערשטער וועט  
ניט העלפן רחמנא ליצלן, איז דאס א  
חילול השם. אומות העולם ארט ניט און  
זיי טראכטן ניט צי אידן זיינען גאנץ אין  
תורה ומצוות אדער ניט חס ושלום, זיי  
וויסן נאר אז אידן זיינען בנים פון  
אויבערשטן . . . —

G-d's salvation comes because the enemies and haters of the Jews are really "Your enemies" and "those who hate You." In other words: If antisemites would see that they could antagonize Jews—G-d's treasured nation—and G-d did not intervene, that would be a desecration of G-d's name. Antisemites don't know and don't care whether Jews are religious or not; they only know that Jews are G-d's children.



# TEXT 12

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 23, p. 79-80*

און דאס איז די תפלה "קומה הוי" ויפוצו  
גו": "כדי עס זאל זיין "ויפוצו אויביך  
וינוסו משנאיך" מוז זיין בגילוי דער  
פארבונד והתקשרות פון אידן בהקדוש  
ברוך הוא וואס קיין זאך בעולם קען עס  
נישט אפשרוואכן, וואס מצד דעם (איז אין  
וואס פאר א מצב א איד זאל נאר זיין) איז  
"להחליפם באומה אחרת איני יכול", ווייל  
דעמאלט שטייט בגלוי ווי שונאי ישראל  
זיינען "משנאיך" (ווייל ישראל וקודשא  
ברוך הוא כולא חד), ובמילא ווערט  
"ויפוצו אויביך וינוסו משנאיך".

Therefore, the prayer is "Arise, O L-rd, and may Your enemies be scattered, etc." When Jews are openly connected to G-d, connected in such a way that nothing in the world can weaken their connection, it is plain that those who hate Jews are really "those who hate You." Then, the prayer becomes relevant: "May Your foes be scattered and may those who hate You flee."

Focus on fortifying  
your bond with G-d  
and the background  
noise will fade away.



## KEY POINTS

1. A *sonoi* is someone who harbors a deep, obsessive hatred.
2. When the Torah speaks of a *sonoi* of G-d, it includes a *sonoi* of the Jewish people, for someone who hates Jews really hates G-d.
3. There is no rational explanation for antisemitism. The usual reasons presented are absurd and often mutually exclusive.
4. Because hatred of Jews is really hatred of G-d, the correct response to antisemitism is to reinforce our connection with G-d. In doing so, we clarify Who the battle is really against and invoke His protection.

