

Esther 4:1-17
But If You Keep Silent
WRCoB 12.04.22

Why are Jews such a hated people in the world?

If you Google that question

You'll come up with explanations like these.

From the *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

Antisemitism is often referred to as the oldest hatred, spanning nearly 2,000 years.

Or this from the *American Jewish Center*.

Antisemitism is the most ancient hatred, rooted in Christian religious teachings that go back millennia.

These organizations blame anti-Semitism on Christianity.

However, according to another website

Simple to Remember Judaism Online

antisemitism goes back even further.

It has been said that the history of almost all of the Jewish holidays can be summed up succinctly: "They wanted to kill us; we won. Let's eat."

The site asks why anti-Semitism has been so prevalent

In so many countries, in so many time periods

For so many reasons.

It goes on to state that between the years 250 and 1948
Jews had over 80 forced expatriations
From countries throughout the world.

And if you've watched Ken Burn's Holocaust
You noted the US denied countless Jewish immigrants
From entry into the US during Hitler's uprising.

And so, why is it people hate Jews so much?

The website lists six reasons.

1. **Economic** -- "We hate Jews because they possess too much wealth and power."
2. **Chosen People** -- "We hate Jews because they arrogantly claim that they are the chosen people."
3. **Scapegoat** -- "Jews are a convenient group to single out and blame for our troubles."
4. **Deicide** -- "We hate Jews because they killed Jesus."
5. **Outsiders**, -- "We hate Jews because they are different than us." (The dislike of the unlike.)
6. **Racial Theory** -- "We hate Jews because they are an inferior race."

To be sure, much of the hatred towards the Jews
Comes from Christians who blame them
For the death of Jesus.

I would argue that antisemitism started much earlier.

In fact, though I am not an expert on these sorts of things
I would propose antisemitism
Began with God's initial call to Abraham.

Remember, God called Abraham to leave his country
And go to the land where God sent him.

Unfortunately, that piece of real estate was already taken.

And claiming Canaan as their nation
Involved a whole lot of wars and violence
That continues to this day.

In my opinion, antisemitism started back at the beginning

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The story of Esther is a story of anti-Semitism.

BTW, did you know that the word Semite
Comes from Shem, the eldest of Noah's three sons.

He is thought to be the ancestor of the Semitic people.

Actually, they are known by many names
Hebrews, Israelites, Jews, and Semites.

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Last week, Brother David Brunk bravely preached
From the OT book, **Song of Songs**.

He stated God is never mentioned in the Song of Songs

Neither is God mentioned in the Book of Esther.

The only two books in the Bible where God is not mentioned.

But, as we all know
God doesn't have to be mentioned to be present.

And in the Book of Esther

God is written all over the pages

Without ever having to use God's name!

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King Xerxes, otherwise known as King Ahasuerus

Was a Persian king who reigned from 486 to 465 BC.

This was the period of time after the two kingdoms

Israel and Judah were conquered

By the Assyrians in the north

And the Babylonians in the south.

It was a period of time when the Jews were without a home

And were scattered throughout the region.

But when the Persian king Cyrus conquered Babylon

He allowed the Jewish people more freedom

Many Jews returned to Jerusalem

Led by Ezra and Nehemiah.

Still, many chose to continue to live as expats.

Many, like the biblical character Daniel

Became upright and successful citizens

In the country they found themselves in.

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Now, Haman was an advisor to King Xerxes

And was a racist and a hater of Jews.

He could not stand the fact that Mordechai, a Jew

Refused to bow down before him.

His hatred grew until he decided
The Jewish people had to be extinguished.

He went and told King Xerxes
What a miserable lot these Jews were.

And convinced King Xerxes
Who then ordered a genocidal royal decree.

But the queen, unbeknownst to the king
Was also Jewish and a cousin to Mordecai.

When Mordecai told her of Haman's plot
She boldly went to the king.

She confessed that she too was a Jew
And his decree would kill her and all her people.

Due to his love for Queen Esther
King Xerxes revoke the edict

And instead hung Haman and his sons
From the very gallows Haman had built
For Mordecai and the Jews

Queen Esther then encouraged the king
That Mordecai should have Haman's old job

If we stopped here,
We could say "and they all lived happily ever after."

But Mordecai grew more powerful
And the Jewish people were emboldened.

They felt that a little revenge was in order.

[They] killed seventy-five thousand of those who hated them (Esther 9:16).

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In ways, God choosing the Jews as God's chosen people
Feels, at times, more a curse than a blessing.

The Jews have not had it easy.

And it's true that for the past 2000 years
A lot of the discrimination against the Jews
Come from people who call themselves Christian.

Bitterly ironic, many of the hate groups in the United States
Call themselves Christian..

Nick Fuentes, who recently had dinner
With the newly-announced GOP presidential-candidate
Is a white supremacist political commentator.

He calls himself a Christian.

According to the New York Times
He pushes what is called "replacement theory"

The theory that immigrants and people of color
Are intentionally seeking to replace white Americans
In numbers and power.

The NYT quote him as saying

“Our civilization is being dismantled, our people are being genocided . . .”

“The Founders never intended for America to be a refugee camp for nonwhite people.”

“I don’t see Jews as Europeans and I don’t see them as part of Western civilization, particularly because they are not Christians.”

Fuentes denies the Holocaust ever occurred.

Fortunately, many GOP politicians denounce Fuentes
And deplore that one of their own had dinner with him.

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According to the Anti-Defamation League
Violence against Jews hit an all-time high
In 2021 with 2,717 incidents.

That is seven incidents per day for the year.

There is a strong resurgence of anti-Semitism in our country.

And we need speak out against it.

The words of Mordecai to Esther ring with truth
Not only to the situation they faced

But every act of violence perpetrated
Against any culture, race, ethnicity or religion.

Our silence against such hate crimes
Only empower those whose hatred drives them.

Esther 4:14 NIV

14 For if you remain silent at this time . . . you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

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In 1958, following the Montgomery Bus Boycott

MLK, Jr. published his experience

Entitled, *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*

He writes

If the moderates of the white South fail to act now, history will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.

Our generation will have to repent not only for the acts and words of the children of darkness but also for the fears and apathy of the children of light.

His words are for such a time as this.

Whether it is the struggle to end racism

Against our African American brothers and sisters

Or the struggle against anti-Semitism

Or the struggle against any and all forms of xenophobia

We cannot play neutral or be complacent

Or remain silent in the face of such injustice.

We must speak up.

We must make our voices heard.

We must stand in solidarity with the marginalized.

Proverbs 31:8-9 NLT

**⁸ Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves;
ensure justice for those being crushed.**

**⁹ Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless,
and see that they get justice.**

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As Christians it is an absolute necessity
That we stand on the right side of history.

To make right the wrongs
That have been done in the name of Jesus.

For this is just such a time.

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Elie Weisel lived through the death camps
Of Auschwitz and Buchenwald.

He was a Holocaust survivor.

He wrote many books of his experiences
Most notably his book, *Night*.

He was a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

He, too, was very concerned by people
Who chose not to interfere or intervene
In the injustices of the world.

We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference.

We may never know why God called Abraham and Sarah
To be the parents of a new nation

A nation that would bless all other nations.

But God holds a special place for the Jews.

And so should we.

For God chose a Jew named Jesus
Whose roots go deep
Through the heart of Jewish genealogy

God chose a Jew to be our deliverer
For just such a time as this!

God chose Israel to be the people
Through whom Jesus the Christ would be born?

Come thou long-expected Jesus
Born to set your people free.

He is the hope of all the earth
Desire of every nation
And joy of every longing heart.