

Historical Roots and Origins

ANTI-SEMITISM:

German Anti-Semitism

- German anti-Semitism is not new
- Common historic tradition of hatred of Jewish people
 - Bible:
 - Book of Esther 3:13
 - Haman the prime minister to King Ahasuerus (aka Xerxes)
 - “Kill all the Jews in Persia...”
 - Esther prevents the massacre
 - Jewish holiday of Purim comes from this incident
 - Purim is a festive Jewish holiday that celebrates the deliverance of the Jews from their enemies in the biblical Book of Esther. Purim is celebrated on the fourteenth day of the Hebrew month of Adar, which usually falls sometime in February or March.
- German anti-Semitism is deeply rooted in older traditions going far back in history

After these events King Ahasuerus raised Haman, son of Hammedatha the Agagite, to high rank, seating him above all his fellow officials.

2

¹ All the king's servants who were at the royal gate would kneel and bow down to Haman, for that is what the king had ordered in his regard. Mordecai, however, would not kneel and bow down.

3

The king's servants who were at the royal gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you disobey the king's order?"

4

When they had reminded him day after day and he would not listen to them, they informed Haman, to see whether Mordecai's explanation was acceptable, since he had told them that he was a Jew.

5

When Haman observed that Mordecai would not kneel and bow down to him, he was filled with anger.

6

Moreover, he thought it was not enough to lay hands on Mordecai alone. Since they had told Haman of Mordecai's nationality, he sought to destroy all the Jews, Mordecai's people, throughout the realm of King Ahasuerus.

7

² In the first month, Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, the pur, or lot, was cast in Haman's presence to determine the day and the month for the destruction of Mordecai's people on a single day, and the lot fell on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar.

8

Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus: "Dispersed among the nations throughout the provinces of your kingdom, there is a certain people living apart, with laws differing from those of every other people. They do not obey the laws of the king, and so it is not proper for the king to tolerate them.

9

If it please the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them; and I will deliver to the procurators ten thousand silver talents for deposit in the royal treasury."

10

³ The king took the signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews.

11

"The silver you may keep," the king said to Haman, "but as for this people, do with them whatever you please."

12

So the royal scribes were summoned; and on the thirteenth day of the first month they wrote, at the dictation of Haman, an order to the royal satraps, the governors of every province, and the officials of every people, to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language. It was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the royal signet ring.

13

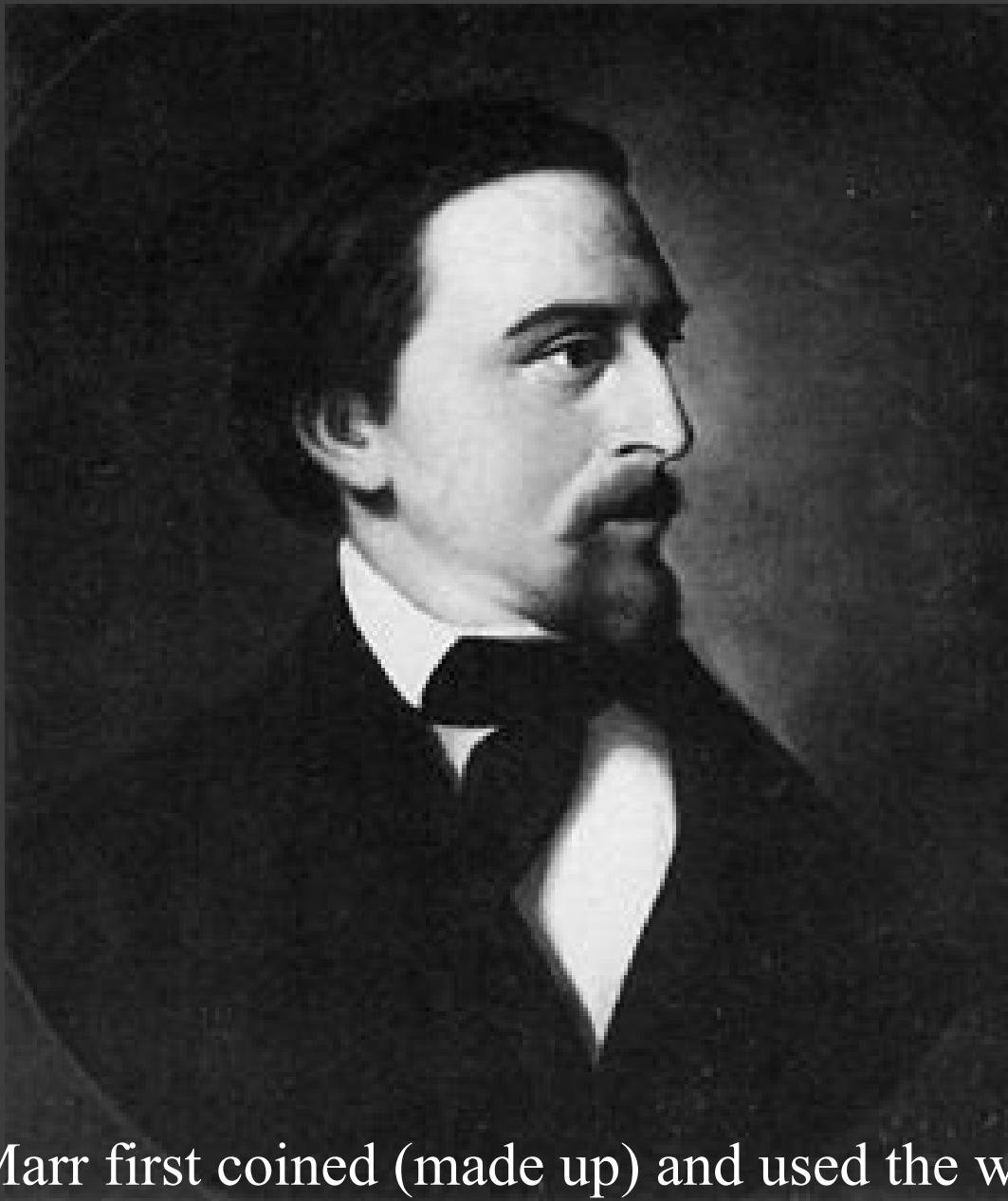
Letters were sent by couriers to all the royal provinces, that all the Jews, young and old, including women and children, should be killed, destroyed, wiped out in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, and that their goods should be seized as spoil.

○ Anti-Semitism

- Term originated in the 1870's
- Journalist *Wilhelm Marr* wanted to contrast scientific/racial hatred of Jews with religious forms of anti-Judaism

○ Dates back as far as the ancient world

- Rome worried Jewish refusal to worship imperial gods would compromise the security of the state
- 70 C.E. Rome destroyed the Jewish temple in Jerusalem stopping a Jewish rebellion
- 60 years later Rome ran the Jews out of their homeland of Palestine. Many forced to live in Europe where they have been for over 2000 years



Wilhelm Marr first coined (made up) and used the word
“AntiSemitism.”

○ Early Christianity

- Christianity grew out of Judaism
- Christianity sought to separate itself from Judaism
 - Jews came to be considered “Christ killers” and demonized as agents of the devil.
 - Guilty of “deicide” or murder of God (Jesus)
 - Christian “Teaching of Contempt”
 - 5th century through 16th century Christianity taught that Jews were rebels against God
 - Jewish suffering was God’s judgment against them for rejecting Jesus
- Jews in Europe begin to be seen as “other” and “outsiders”

- Contact between Jews and Christians was carefully regulated
 - Intermarriage was prohibited
 - Jews were excluded:
 - From the army
 - Most administrative jobs
 - From the legal profession
 - Money lending/banking was open to Jews
 - Christian Church did not allow Christians to lend money at interest
 - Needed role but unpopular
- Middle Ages & Crusades
 - 9th through the 16th centuries difficult times for Jews in Europe

○ Crusades

- Christians' desire to recapture holy places from Islamic forces
 - Attacks against Muslims and Christian heretics often resulted in violence against Jews as well
 - Violent attacks were called “pogroms”
 - Lateran Council of 1215 declared for Jewish safety they wear specially marked clothing
 - In France they wore yellow patches!
 - Jews were blamed and attacked for causing the bubonic plague of 1348 (Black Death)

○ Medieval Europe

- Feudal society

- No concept of equal rights
 - Rather different relationships between different individuals or groups:
 - Lords, vassals, kings and cities, cities and guilds, guilds and craftsmen.
 - The Jewish community negotiated for rights and privileges with Christian religious and secular officials.
 - To safeguard their community, their religion, culture and distinctive way of life.
 - Forced the Jewish community to live separately from the dominant Christian culture of the time.
 - Were not able to settle or live where they wanted.
 - Ghettos developed
 - Small, highly congested living spaces often gated and locked during important Christian festivals.

● Jewish community became the “scapegoat” for Christians

- Jews were vulnerable to attacks and paid protection money, stuck together and kept a low profile.
 - 1492: King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain expelled all Jews and Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula.
 - Except those who agreed to convert to Christianity
 - But Jewish converts were often viewed with suspicion and regarded as being tainted by supposed “Jewish blood.”
 - The idea of Jewish being its own “race” was not an entirely original concept of the Nazis



- German woodcut from 1493 of Jews being burned alive after having been forced into a pit.



Doc. 4: Photograph by the secret resistance movement at Auschwitz.
APMO, negative 277.

- Protestant Reformation (16th Century)
 - Martin Luther breaks away from the Catholic Christian Church.
 - Martin Luther said:
 - *“Know Christian that next to the devil thou hast no enemy more cruel, more venomous and violent than a true Jew.”*
- Catholic and Non-Catholic Christian teaching today
 - Neither teach nor believe these things about Jewish people.
 - Early Christianity’s anti-Jewish feelings sustained for centuries contributed to conditions in Europe that eventually targeted Jews for annihilation.