

ARTICLES
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PAAVO AHONEN

Antisemitism: The Origins of the Concept and
the First Stages of the Study of Antisemitism
Internationally and in Finland

Antisemitism refers to the longest-lasting form of hatred, a millennia-long hostility directed at Jews. The key elements of antisemitism developed as part of the church's history, doctrine and teaching. 'Antisemitism' as a concept came into general use in Germany about 150 years ago. By the 1870s, equal rights had been granted to German Jews. So-called antisemites targeted these rights and pursued political actions to quash the increasing societal influence of Jews. This article first describes the origins of 'antisemitism' as a concept and how and when it spread to Finland. Secondly, it describes the first stages of research on antisemitism both internationally and in Finland. It also provides an overall picture of the knowledge on antisemitism available in Finland, from the 1870s to the mid-20th century. The primary sources of this article comprise key studies and texts dealing with antisemitism from this period, as well as Finnish newspapers from the turn of the 1880s. With the help of these sources, this article aims to shed light on the aforementioned parts of history and also deepen scholarly understanding of antisemitism as a phenomenon.

RUTH ILLMAN & ELINA VUOLA

'I have not experienced antisemitism, but...':
Finnish Jewish Women's
Experiences of Antisemitism

This article examines the experiences of antisemitism by Finnish Jewish women in modern-day Finland. Our material consists of interviews with Finnish Jews conducted during two different research projects, 2015–2020. The main

theoretical approach is Helen Fein's (1987) cultural-historical definition of antisemitism as a structural, discursive and individual framework. We examine how the model elucidates our data, how it can be used to structure the interviewees' experiences and how the gendered nature of antisemitism is manifested in them. As for religion, we ask how 'traditional' antisemitic clichés based on Christianity that have developed over the millennia are reflected in the material. Our conclusion is that Fein's model proves to be a useful, albeit rigid, way of structuring ethnographic material focusing on everyday experiences. At the same time, our site-specific and experience-focused analysis provides new information on the changing manifestations of antisemitism in Finland, change being one of the emphases in the analysis. Of particular concern is that, in the experiences of Finnish Jewish women, antisemitism, perceptions of threat and feelings of fear have increased over time.

DÓRA PATARICZA &
MERCÉDESZ CZIMBALMOS

Russian-speaking Jewish Narratives
of Antisemitism and Discrimination
in the Soviet Union and Finland

Finland is often considered one of the most secularized countries in the world, despite the majority of its population still belonging to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Nevertheless, Finland hosts vibrant Jewish communities that exhibit diversity despite their small size. These communities comprise approximately 1,500 individuals and are divided into three groups: two Orthodox communities and a recently established Reform community. Members represent various nationalities, forms of religious practice and Jewish traditions. Since the early 1990s, former

Soviet nationals have joined these Jewish communities. This article analyses the narratives of former Soviet Jews or Jews with roots in the former Soviet Union, regarding their lives before and after relocating to Finland, with a particular focus on their experiences of antisemitism. The study explores the experiences by Jews of hatred or hostility in the Soviet Union and investigates whether they have encountered antisemitism in Finland. The narratives are based on interviews conducted in the 'Embodied Religion' project and the 'Minhag Finland' project activities.

ANDRÉ SWANSTRÖM

Israel, Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism in the Editorials of *Helsingin Sanomat*, 1990–2023

The article starts from the experience of Jews living in Finland, according to which the leading Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* treats Israel unequally compared to other countries, often to the extent that criticism of Israel turns into antisemitism. In the article the IHRA definition of antisemitism is applied to the editorials of *Helsingin Sanomat*, supplemented by comparisons to antisemitism stereotypes. During the years 1990–2023, a total of 440 articles on the editorial page dealt with Israel as a central topic. Of these articles, the vast majority were more or less critical of Israel's policies and military actions. Much of this criticism was not antisemitic. There were 62 articles that met the criteria of antisemitism, or 14.1% of the articles. These editorials applied the classic stereotypes of antisemitism to Israel, equating Israeli policies with the Holocaust. These editorials were not isolated journalistic mishaps. Instead, they represent a systematic problem in the attitudes of the writers of the editorials. Signs of change can, however, be seen in one of the editorials, where the editors admit that criticism of Israel can be antisemitic in nature.

SERAFIM SEPPÄLÄ

Sinai and Auschwitz:
How Did the Holocaust Impact
the Notion of the Chosen People?

The article discusses the contents and functions of the idea of the chosen people in Jewish post-Holocaust theology. The topic opens a kind of reverse perspective into antisemitism, shedding light on its effects on Jewish self-understanding. The study is based on the classics of post-Holocaust theology (Emil Fackenheim, Eliezer Berkovits, Irving Greenberg, Richard Rubenstein, Ignaz Maybaum, Arthur Cohen), in addition to a selection of 'ultra-Orthodox' voices. The idea of the chosen people underwent an unprecedented upheaval after the Holocaust. A spectrum of perspectives unfolded within the field of Jewish thought, ranging from rejecting covenantal thinking (Rubenstein) to a radical reformulation (Maybaum), reinterpretation (Cohen), inversion (Greenberg), moderate updating (Berkovits) or, in traditional haredi Judaism, adherence to the classical model. In each case, the concepts of chosenness and covenant are intimately linked to the perception of God: the more radically it evolves, the less there appears to remain of the traditional understandings of covenant and chosenness.