

OPENING THE GATES

A Toolkit for Church Leaders
to Address Antisemitism

This initiative is supported by CJP's Center for Combating Antisemitism.
Learn more: cjp.org/CCA



TOOLKIT MAP



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PART 1 - INTRODUCTION

WELCOME: OPENING THE GATES

[Welcome](#)

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WELCOME: Opening the Gates



[Contact: orose@hebrewcollege.edu](mailto:orose@hebrewcollege.edu)

WELCOME: Opening the Gates

The toolkit takes its name from Matthew 7:14 and Psalm 118:19

But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

- Matthew 7:14

Open the gates of righteousness for me, that I may enter them and praise God.

- Psalm 118:19

The road to effectively address antisemitism and other forms of hate, may feel narrow at times. Indeed, the work demands specific practices and knowledge - particular strategies that this toolkit makes accessible. Together, may we open the gates to the path of pluralism.

How do we create a shared path forward?

How do we open the gates of righteousness for our communities?

WELCOME: Gates And Bridges As Metaphors For Allyship

*The whole world is a very narrow bridge,
but the main thing to recall,
is not to fear all that is ahead.*

- Based on a teaching from Rabbi Nahman
of Bratslav,
Likkutei Moharan II 48:2

Recording here (Hebrew):
[Gesher Tzar Me'od singalong and lyrics
video](#)



פתח־וּלִי שַׁעֲרֵי־צֶדֶק אֲבֹאֲבֵם אוֹדֶה קָה

*Open the gates of righteousness
for me, that I may enter them
and praise God.*

- Psalm 118:19



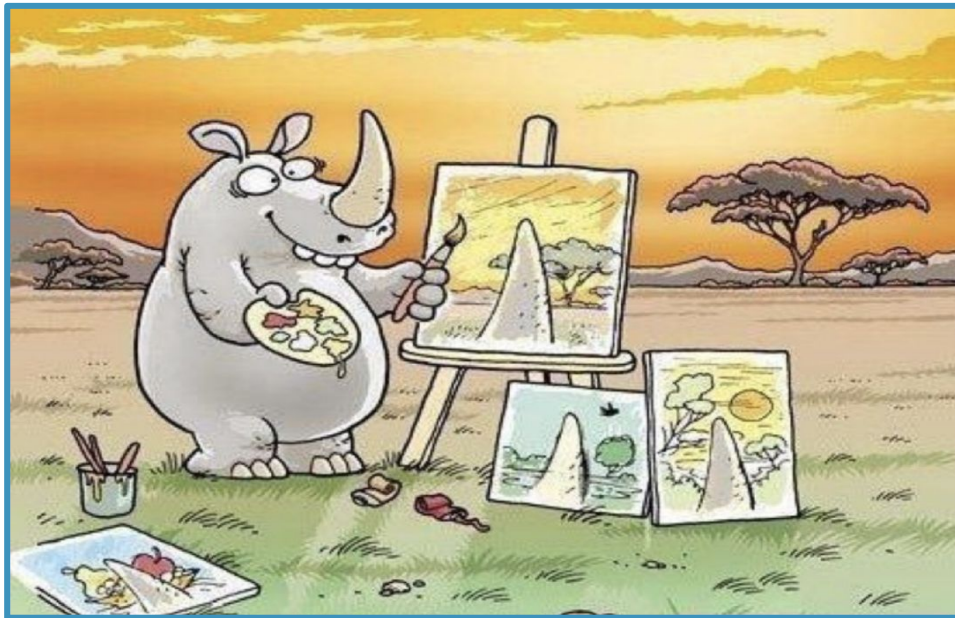
*Bridges don't fall from the
sky. They don't rise from the
earth. People build them.*

- Dr. Eboo Patel,
Interfaith America



WELCOME: What Shapes a Person's Perspective?

None of us can see everything.



CONSIDER:

- What do we see?
- What do we not see?
- Why?
- Can we refocus?
- How?



REFLECT: Who Seeded Your Call to this Work?

- Who is one person that inspires you to engage people across difference?
- What is one value or virtue this person exemplifies?
 - ◆ *The goal of this toolkit is not only to deepen our own learning. The goal is to prepare for inviting our communities into reflection and dialogue on interreligious engagement, and specifically, the work of addressing antisemitism. How do the virtues/values you have identified serve as a guide, as you reach out to others?*

PART 2: A Learning Journey

Definitions of Antisemitism

↳ [Reflection Prompt](#)

Background & History of Antisemitism

↳ [Reflection Prompt](#)

Antisemitism & Israel-Palestine

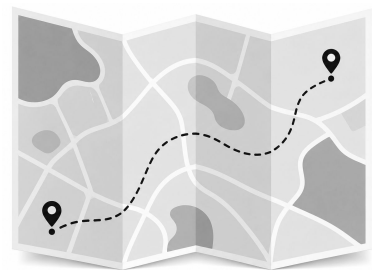
↳ [Reflection Prompt](#)

Actions to Take Today

↳ [Reflection Prompt](#)

PART 2: A Learning Journey

This map/table shows, in greater detail, how the toolkit organizes its content for your learning journey.



Definitions of Antisemitism	Who is a Jew?	Is the World on Fire or is it Aglow?	What is Antisemitism?
Background and History of Antisemitism	A Long Global History	History in the United States	Current Trends in the US
Antisemitism and Israel-Palestine	What is or is not antisemitism	Terms to Know	
Actions to Take Today	Harms to Spot	Proactive Actions	

We start with definitions of antisemitism, but place them in a discussion of Jewish identity and experience

DEFINITIONS: Who is a Jew?

Though generally considered a religion, Judaism is much more.

The classic Hebrew term for Jews - *Am Yisrael*, “the People of Israel” - conveys a sense of **peoplehood**, that is of belonging to a nation with a history, a belief system, a sacred language, a connection to one another, and a historic homeland. Jews come from many races and ethnicities, with many subcultures, unique traditions, and languages.

- *T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, A Very Brief Guide to Antisemitism, 2022*

Jewish Demographic Information (as of 2023):

- Global Jewish population: **16.8 million**
- US Jewish population: **7.5 million**
- Israeli Jewish population: **7.4 million**
- France: **440,000**
- Canada: **400,000**
- United Kingdom: **310,000**

- *The American Jewish Yearbook 2023*



DEFINITIONS:

How Do Jews Understand Antisemitism?

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Eruvin 13b

Rabbi Abba said in the name of Shmuel,

For three years, the House of Hillel and the House of Shammai argued.

one said: 'The law is like us,'

and the other said: 'The law is like us.'

A heavenly voice spoke: "These and these are the words of the living God, and the law is like the House of Hillel."

A question was raised:

Since the heavenly voice declared:

"Both these and these are the words of the Living God,"

why was the law established following the view of Hillel?

It is because the students of Hillel were kind and gracious.

They taught their own ideas as well as the ideas from the students of Shammai.

Furthermore, they went so far as to teach Shammai's opinions first.

*Judaism is multivocal.
Jews have different
understandings of
antisemitism, reflecting
diverse voices on essential
issues throughout our
history.*



DEFINITIONS: Is the World on Fire or Aglow?



“God said to Abram, Go forth...”
- Genesis 12:1

... Rabbi Isaac said:

This is analogous to a person who was traveling from place to place and came upon a *birah doleket*: a “palace on fire” or “aglow.”

He wondered,

“Is it possible that this palace has no master?”

The master of the palace peered out at him and said,
“I am the master of the palace.”

Similarly, Abraham Our Father said,

“Is it possible that the world has no master?”

Thus, God peered out at him and said,
“I am the Master of the universe.”

- Genesis Rabbah 39:1



When we think
about Jewish life,
including
antisemitism,
is the world on
fire or is it aglow?

DEFINITIONS: Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel was one of the most profound Jewish thinkers of the 20th century and a courageous advocate for human dignity. He was an exemplar of living in a world that is both broken and beautiful. He chose to see the world as aglow, despite the reality of the fire.

Learn more: [“My Legs Were Praying”](#) by Rabbi Or Rose

The Holocaust in Jewish Memory:

“I speak as a person who was able to leave Warsaw, the city in which I was born, just six weeks before the disaster began.

My destination was New York City;
it would have been Auschwitz or Treblinka.

I’m a brand plucked from the fire in which my people were burned to death.”

- **“No Religion is an Island,” 1965**
(Union Theological Seminary)

The Holocaust and Life as Celebration:

“Remember that there is a meaning beyond absurdity...

Build life as if it were a work of art...

Remember that life is a celebration...”

- ***The Eternal Light, 1972***

(Heschel’s final interview)



At left: Dr. Heschel
marches with Dr.
Martin Luther King.

DEFINITION 1:

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)

Adopted: 2016 (widespread adoption globally since 2019)

Definition:

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

Key elements:

- Emphasizes antisemitism that can manifest in rhetoric or action.
- Accompanied by 11 illustrative examples, including stereotypes, Holocaust denial, and certain critiques of Israel.
- Adopted by numerous countries, international organizations, and institutions worldwide, including the U.S. government.
- Aims to guide education, policy, and the identification of antisemitism globally.



DEFINITIONS 2:

Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA)

Adopted: 2021

Definition:

Antisemitism is discrimination, prejudice, hostility or violence against Jews as Jews (or Jewish institutions as Jewish).

Key elements:

- Defines antisemitism principally as discrimination or hostility toward Jews and Jewish institutions.
- Focuses on distinguishing antisemitism from legitimate criticism of Israel and Zionism.
- Provides 15 guidelines clarifying what is and isn't antisemitic, intended to protect free speech and political discourse.
- Formulated by over 200 scholars to address concerns about ambiguity and overreach in other definitions.



The Jerusalem
Declaration on
Antisemitism

DEFINITION 3:

Nexus Document

Published: 2021

Definition:

Antisemitism consists of anti-Jewish beliefs, attitudes, actions, or systemic conditions. It includes discrimination, prejudice, hostility, or violence against Jews as Jews (or Jewish institutions as Jewish).

Key elements:

- Takes a broader sociological and systemic perspective.
- Recognizes individual and systemic bias, including social and political conditions.
- Emphasizes that criticism of Israel or Zionism is not necessarily antisemitic unless it includes anti-Jewish intent or tropes.
- Includes detailed examples of antisemitic and non-antisemitic expressions related to Israel and Zionism.





Reflect: Define Antisemitism

- What do you think is essential to defining antisemitism?
- What remains unclear or ambiguous?



BACKGROUND & HISTORY:

Six Stages in the Evolution of anti-Judaism/Antisemitism

- I. Pre-Christian anti-Judaism in ancient Greece and Rome - primarily ethnic animus
- II. Christian anti-Judaism in antiquity and the Middle Ages - primarily religious animus
- III. Muslim anti-Judaism - primarily religious animus (Jews were often a protected class in Muslim societies)
- IV. Anti-Judaism of Enlightenment Europe - political, social, and economic
- V. Racial antisemitism arising in the 19th century - culminating in Nazism
- VI. Contemporary Antisemitism often combines more than one of the following:
 - A. Religious prejudice: Christ-killers, blood libel, devil worshippers
 - B. Cultural stereotyping: Cunning, greedy, cheap, manipulative, disloyal
 - C. Political scapegoating: Arch-Communists, arch-Capitalists, control banks and media
 - D. Racist pseudoscience: Weak, diseased, ugly, (secretly) powerful, demonic (horns & tails)



BACKGROUND AND HISTORY:

From Anti-Judaism to Antisemitism

Modern antisemites view Jews as a nefarious and corrupting presence within society. This negativity originated in antiquity as “anti-Judaism” and evolved into a modern ideology, blurring race and religion.

It emerged as such in German-speaking Central Europe in the late 19th century after the Enlightenment, when Jews gained new civil and political rights. For antisemites, this raised the specter of Jews mixing their “nefarious” ways into modern Christian societies.

“[Throughout history] Jews became a stand in for whatever one wished to condemn in society”

- Rachel Mikva,
Interreligious Studies: An Introduction



Rachel S. Mikva

**Interreligious
Studies**

AN INTRODUCTION



BACKGROUND & HISTORY: Images Through Time



“William of Norwich”
A prototypical blood-libel
1144, England
(painting 1500)



Wilhelm Marr,
*The Way to Victory of
Germanism Over Judaism*,
1879



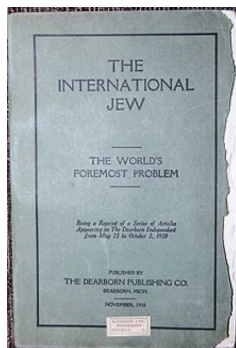
“King Rothschild”
Charles Lucien Léandre,
France,
1898



First edition of the
Protocols of the Elders
of Zion,,
Imperial Russia,
1903



“Behind the Enemy Power:
The Jew”
Nazi Propaganda Poster
Germany,
1942



Henry Ford's version
of the Protocols of the
Elders of Zion,
1920s



Egyptian TV,
dramatization of
the Protocols of the
Elders of Zion
1993



“Jews Will Not Replace Us”
Unite the Right Rally
2017

BACKGROUND & HISTORY: Antisemitism in the U.S.

- Colonial America: Jews faced prejudice and exclusion from professions and institutions.
- 1862: General Ulysses S. Grant issued General Order No. 11, expelling Jews from parts of Tennessee, Kentucky, and Mississippi. President Lincoln rescinded the order.
- 1913: Leo Frank, a Jewish factory superintendent, was falsely convicted of murder in Atlanta. Following a trial marked by antisemitic rhetoric, a mob lynched Frank in 1915.
- 1920s: The revived Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s targeted Jews alongside Black Americans and Catholics, viewing Jews as an existential threat to a “white America.”
- Industrialist Henry Ford published antisemitic propaganda through his newspaper, promoting conspiracy theories and stereotypes that had national reach.
- Well into the 20th century:
 - Leading schools implemented strict quotas to limit Jewish students.
 - Jews were routinely barred from buying homes in certain neighborhoods, joining social clubs, hotels, or working in some professions well into the 20th century.
- Every colonial-era Jewish cemetery in the U.S. has been vandalized at least once in its history.



BACKGROUND & HISTORY: Antisemitism in the U.S.

High-profile mass shootings and assaults targeting Jewish communities and institutions in recent years:

- 2006: Seattle Jewish Federation Shooting (Washington state)
- 2014: Overland Park Jewish Community Center Shooting (Kansas)
- 2018: Tree of Life Synagogue Shooting (Pittsburgh)
- 2019: Poway Synagogue Shooting (California)
- 2019: Jersey City Kosher Supermarket Attack (New Jersey)
- 2019: Monsey Hannukah Celebration Attack (New York state)



The Tree of Life Synagogue
Pittsburgh, PA

BACKGROUND & HISTORY: Antisemitism in the U.S.

High Profile Antisemitic Attacks in The United States - 2025:

Governor Shapiro's Residence, Pennsylvania, April 2025:

The Jewish governor's home was deliberately set on fire during Passover. Officials attributed the crime to animosity related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



Gov. Shapiro's Home

Washington, D.C. Capital Jewish Museum, May 2025:

Two Israeli Embassy staff members - Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Milgrim - were killed leaving a Jewish event.



Victims of DC Shooting

Boulder, Colorado, June 2025:

A group of marchers supporting the release of Israeli hostages in Gaza were attacked by an individual who threw Molotov cocktails at them, resulting in multiple injuries and hospitalizations. The attacker declared his intent to target "Zionists" and had planned this crime for a year.



Boulder, CO attacker

BACKGROUND & HISTORY: Current Trends in the U.S.

- Anti-Jewish hate crimes increased 63% from 2023 to 2024.
- Jewish Americans are just 2% of the U.S. population, but anti-Jewish hate crimes made up 15% of all reported hate crimes in 2023 and 68% of all reported religion-based hate crimes.
- In February 2025, 33% of American Jews said they have been the personal target of antisemitism, in-person or virtually, at least once over the past year.
- 56% of American Jews said they altered their behavior out of fear of antisemitism in 2024 (up from 46% in 2023 and 38% in 2022).

Read more:

[The Rise of Antisemitism & Political Violence in the U.S.](#)

By Callum Sutherland,
Time Magazine

[The State of Antisemitism in America 2024](#)

From the American Jewish
Committee

BACKGROUND & HISTORY:

How Do Jews Understand Antisemitism?

What all Jews can see:

Kanye West - Swastika t-shirt; "Heil Hitler" video
(Over one million views)



Nick Fuentes - Reinstated on X, then given a national platform on Tucker Carlson's show

What one Rabbi reflects:

"Recently, we in the Jewish community have felt the ground shift beneath our feet ... I have to think twice about whether it's safe to wear my kippah, or skullcap, in public, or to display my Jewishness in other identifiable and visible ways. I know I am privileged in this respect, because my ability to pass for White and the fact that I identify as male provides me protection that others who are targeted for their difference don't have. If I feel unsafe wearing my kippah, I can simply take it off. Our synagogues and other communal institutions, however, can't hide their Jewishness quite as easily, and as a result, they have had to become fortresses, with locked doors, armed guards, or police presence, just so our people feel safe showing up." - *Rabbi Michael Knopf*, "An Address to Jews and Other People of Conscience," Interpretation 79:3, July 2025



LEARN MORE: Wrestling with Unintended Impact

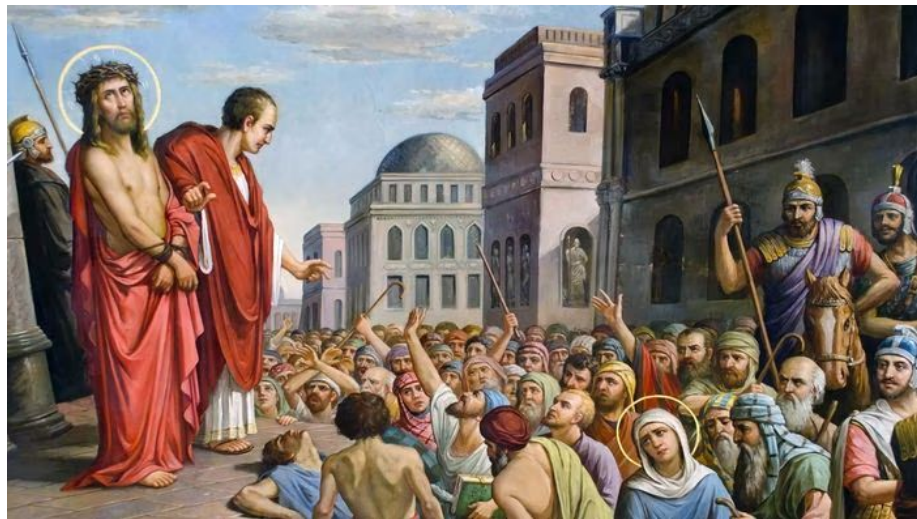
Holy Week and the hatred of the Jews: How to avoid anti-Judaism this Easter

By Amy-Jill Levine (Reposted April 2, 2026)

Levine invites church leaders to proactively recast Easter in light of historical antisemitism expressed within the holiday.

Key quote: “Every year, the same difficulty surfaces: how can a gospel of love be proclaimed, if that same gospel is heard to promote hatred of Jesus’s own people?”

Source: *ABC Religion & Ethics*



Ecce Homo (Pontius Pilate Presenting Christ to the Crowd)

REFLECT: Is Antisemitism a Fixture? Can it be Extinguished?



- What is staying with you?
- What is a question arising for you?
- Consider the roots of antisemitism. Do you believe:
 - ◆ That Jews and allies can extinguish antisemitism, and that this should be the goal of pluralism? Or,
 - ◆ That antisemitism is a reality, and communities must work together to thrive and support one another amidst ebbs and flows of hostility?
- Does the answer impact your approach as an ally?

ANTISEMITISM AND ISRAEL-PALESTINE*:

Examples of Rhetoric or Action that *Are Not* Antisemitic

- Criticism of Israel based on its human rights record or failure to adhere to international law.
- Non-violent protest of Israeli governmental and military actions or policies.
- Waving the Palestinian flag or wearing a keffiyeh, both of which are symbols of the Palestinian national liberation movement, just as the Israeli flag is a symbol of the State of Israel.
- Activism in support of a peace and reconciliation process between Israelis and Palestinians, including robust discussion of different political solutions - allowing both peoples safety, dignity, and independence.



*Because this topic can be divisive, views may differ both within and beyond the Jewish community. Feel free to discuss these points with your Jewish friends and neighbors.

ANTISEMITISM AND ISRAEL-PALESTINE:

Examples of Rhetoric or Action that *Are* antisemitic

- Denying the historical relationship between the Jewish people and the land of Israel.
- Using antisemitic imagery or stereotypes to describe Israel or Israelis.
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for Israel's conduct.
- Protesting Jewish institutions—public or private—simply because they are Jewish.
- Discriminating against Jews or Israeli nationals because of their perceived political views.
- Requiring Jewish people to publicly condemn Israel or Zionism.
- Using the term “Zionist” as a slur.
- Calling for the expulsion of Jews from Israel/Palestine or from any other country.
- Denying the humanity of Israeli Jews, and/or justifying violence toward them—including on October 7.

Qatar, 2018



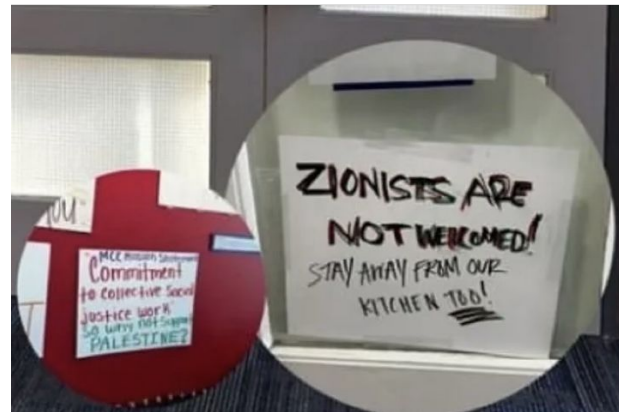
ANTISEMITISM AND ISRAEL-PALESTINE: Real-life Examples of Harm

Exclusion over Zionism

“Zionists not welcome” signs appeared inside a UC Santa Barbara multicultural center; a federal judge ordered UCLA to stop checkpoints that barred Jewish students unless they denounced Israel.

#MeToo – Unless You Are a Jew

UN Women took nearly two months to acknowledge the sexual violence of October 7, and briefly posted then deleted a condemnation.



ANTISEMITISM AND ISRAEL-PALESTINE:

Terms to Know

Write down the terms below on a piece of paper:

- Anti-Zionism
- Apartheid
- BDS: Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions
- “From the River to the Sea”
- Genocide
- Intifada
- Nakba
- Settler Colonialism
- Zionism

Ask:

- What emotions do these words conjure?
- Which terms do I understand?
- Which terms leave me to confused?

The [Very Brief Guide to Antisemitism](#) is a strong resource for learning more.



REFLECT:



- What is staying with you?
- What is a question arising for you?

ACTIONS TO TAKE TODAY: 7 Harms to Learn to Spot

Tokenizing	“But my Jewish friend...” used to dismiss the many
Silencing	Attacking those who empathize, until they go quiet
Erasure	Denying Jewish identity, history or lived fear
Demonizing	Israel or Zionism as uniquely or inherently evil
Dehumanizing	Any tie to Israel made a moral disqualification
Old Tropes	Classic motifs, even riding inside the language of justice
Justifying Violence	“By any means necessary” against Jews or Israel

ACTIONS TO TAKE TODAY: Recommendations

Cultivate Strong Relationships

- Relationships require resilience. Breathe, reflect, consider, act.
- Ask: Can you re-engage? What is required of you/others to do so?

Invest in Education

- Learning is most effective when it is relational.
- Ask: How might I facilitate education that centers relationships?

Challenge Antisemitic Rhetoric and Actions

- Do not ignore or minimize antisemitic rhetoric or actions.
- Work with trusted partners to develop appropriate and effective strategies to respond to antisemitic incidents.

Framework: Project Shema, “Addressing Antisemitism: A Guide for Allies.”



REFLECT:



- What is staying with you?
- What is a question arising for you?

PART 3: Road Ahead - Turnkey Resources

Off-the-shelf, complementary resources to address antisemitism and imbue pluralism into church life:

Sermon Template

[Fall: Call of Abram](#)

Sermon Examples

[Spring: Easter](#)

[Letter to Romans: Keeping the Story Straight](#)

↳ [Reflection Prompt](#)

Teaching Template

[Adult Ed Workshop: Antisemitism 101](#)

↳ [Reflection Prompt](#)

Additional Resource

[A Very Brief Guide to Antisemitism](#)

[A Toolkit for Addressing Antisemitism in Church Practices](#)

[Antisemitism Education at UC Berkeley](#)

↳ [Reflection Prompt](#)

SERMON TEMPLATE & EXAMPLES

Fall: Call of Abram

The template facilitates a quick and simple sermon writing process, addressing antisemitism with both heart and intellectual rigor, weaving between:



Off-the-shelf content



Prompts for writing



Transition suggestions

For those who follow the Narrative Lectionary, this template is for September 20, 2026

This is an original resource from the Miller Center for Interreligious Learning and Leadership at Hebrew College.

Spring: Easter

Father Hehir offered a homily addressing how the easter story has been part of antisemitism in the past, and called on parishioners to work across religious difference in honoring the holiday.

This homily is from St. John - St. Paul Catholic Collaborative in Wellesley, MA.

Letter to Romans: Keeping the Story Straight

Rev. Corey Sanderson preached on Paul's letter to the Romans and the importance of truth-telling. He wrote on similar themes for an [article](#) published by Hebrew College.

This sermon is from Second Church in Newton of West Newton, MA.

REFLECT:



For Clergy, on using sermon resources:

- How might you address antisemitism in your own preaching?
- How might you invite congregants into deeper relationship with the Jewish community, and other faith communities?

ADULT EDUCATION TEMPLATE

Adult Ed Outline

Workshop Title: Antisemitism 101 and an “Ask Me Anything”

Learning Objectives: Strengthen congregants’ ability and confidence to identify antisemitism, building personal understanding through authentic relationships.

Summary: The workshop includes a basic orientation to antisemitism and an outline for Q&A discussion with a member of the Jewish community.

REFLECT:



- How might you adjust the template to best suit your own community?
- The template includes a significant amount of material before the Q&A session. These are options to build shared language and understanding. Do you include all of these activities or prioritize more time for the Q&A component?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



[A Very Brief Guide to Antisemitism](#)

By “T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights”

The guide is available for download and bulk-order in print. It is an ideal companion for adult education, or as a pamphlet to make available for congregants.

[A Toolkit for Addressing Antisemitism in Church Practices](#)

The toolkit focuses on how churches can adjust their own practices to take a more proactive stance on allyship:

“This toolkit is offered to Christian clergy, music directors, directors of religious education, and lay leaders to aid in locating and uprooting manifestations of antisemitism in our communal life and practice.”

By Lexington United Against Antisemitism of Lexington, MA

UC Berkeley | Center for Jewish Studies

[Antisemitism Education Initiative at UC Berkeley](#)

The initiative provides cutting-edge resources focused on higher education in particular, but which are applicable for wide use. These include videos, lectures/presentations and courses.

The initiative’s [resource page](#) includes recommendations for books, podcasts, videos, web resources and more.