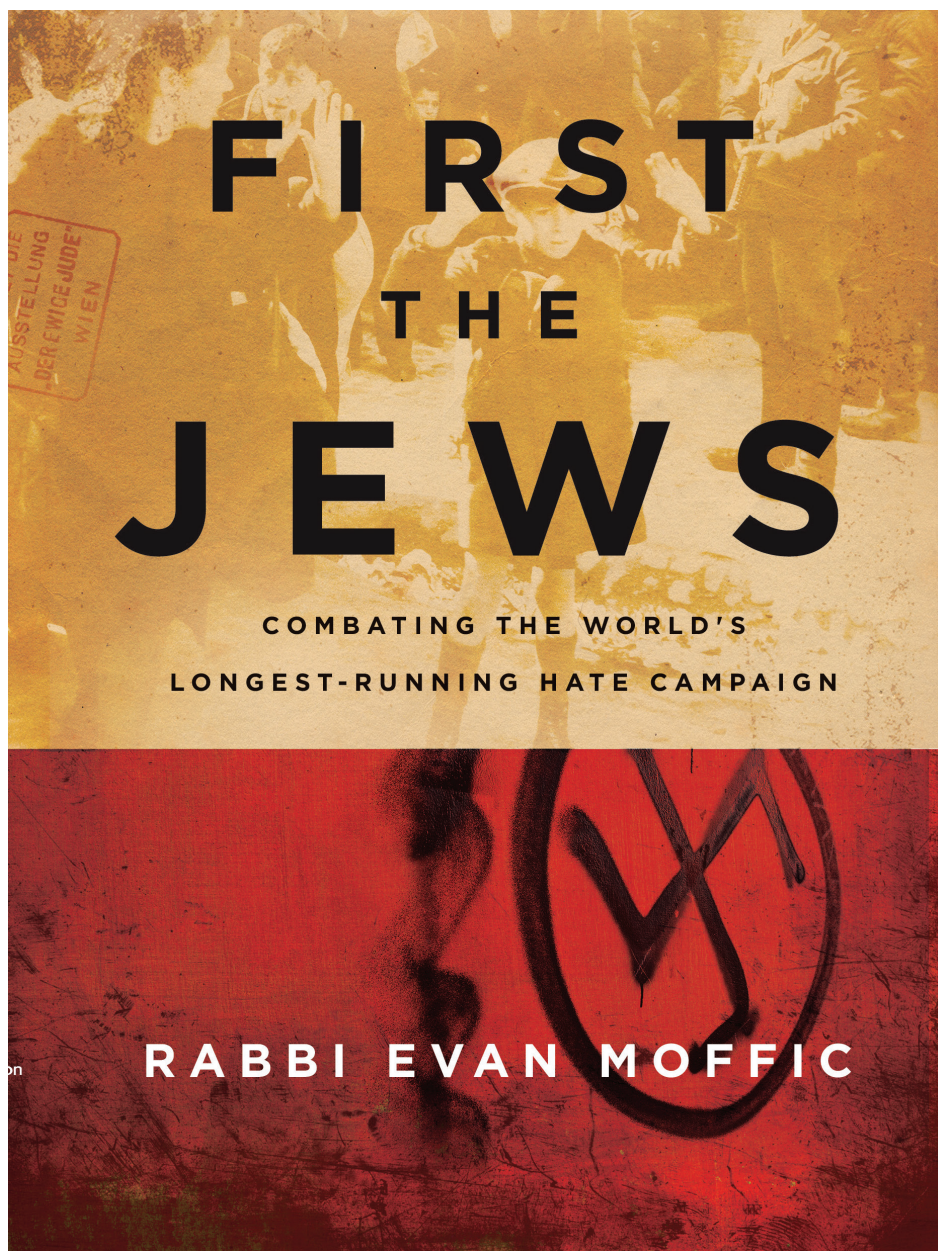


Discussion Guide



DISCUSSION GUIDE
FIRST THE JEWS
COMBATING THE WORLD'S LONGEST-RUNNING HATE CAMPAIGN

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Introduction

Welcome to this summary and study guide of Rabbi Evan Moffic's *First the Jews*.

In his book, Rabbi Moffic leads readers through the long history of what he calls “the world’s oldest hatred”—prejudice, intolerance, and violence directed at Jews—and also offers guidance on what people and communities concerned about anti-Semitism can do to combat it. As he stresses at several points, anti-Semitism is not simply a problem for Jews. It is a problem for everyone who values human freedom and the dignity of the individual human being.

Individual readers and study groups will find this guide most useful when used as a complement to, not a replacement for, *First the Jews*. Each chapter contains:

- A **summary** of a chapter in Rabbi Moffic’s book, highlighting the most important facts and themes in each. Use these summaries to refresh your memory or to help bring those in your group who may not have finished the chapter up to speed.
- A selection of **questions for discussion and reflection**. Some of these questions direct you back to Rabbi Moffic’s text to investigate particular issues in further detail; others ask for your thoughts and opinions. Many questions do both. Do not feel you must use all the questions.
- A list of **ideas for further study**. Many suggest directions for independent research; others suggest movies, mentioned in Rabbi Moffic’s book, that you and your group could view to enhance your study of *First the Jews*.

While prepared primarily for Christian readers studying *First the Jews* in an adult Christian education setting, this guide could also help facilitate discussion in interfaith groups. When questions refer to Christian perspectives, invite participants from other or no faith traditions to offer their unique points of view.

May this guide, like Rabbi Moffic’s book, help sustain communities of faith as we together watch and work for the day when all God’s children live together in peace.

Chapter 1

Surprise

Summary

“How do we distinguish legitimate criticism of Israel from anti-Semitism?” (page 6).

To answer this question, Rabbi Moffic surveys eroding support for the state of Israel since the 1970s among “many on the political and social left in America” (page 3), arguing these critics no longer share a once-common American view of Israel as “a country of hope and redemption, and a moral beacon to the world” (page 2).

Moffic offers several criteria for identifying “sometimes veiled and sometimes pointed anti-Semitism” (page 3). Anti-Semitism:

- Holds all Jews responsible for some Jews’ actions—especially, in this context, holding Jews who live outside Israel responsible for the policies and actions of Israel’s government;
- Denies Judaism’s “historic [and] present connection to a land and a state” (page 9);
- Forces Jews to choose between their identity as Jews and other valid and important identities, and between their faith and their politics;
- Views Jews as a privileged, wealthy people oppressing other peoples;
- Regards Jews as deceitful and untrustworthy;
- Perpetuates a negative narrative about the state of Israel in which it is the villain;
- Accuses the state of Israel of official racism; and
- Expresses hostility toward and refuses to identify with Judaism, Jewish values, and the Jewish historical experience.

Acknowledging the lack of a “hard-and-fast rule for saying one statement is anti-Semitic but another is legitimate political criticism,” Moffic suggests Israeli foreign minister Natan Sharansky’s “3D test” as helpful (pages 23–24):

- Demonization—“scapegoating Jews for the world’s problems” by “exaggerating Jewish power through rhetoric and imagery”
- Double standards—criticizing “Israel and only Israel without any reference to actions of other countries or communities”

- Delegitimization—“attacking the Jewish people’s right to self-determination”

Moffic concludes the chapter by quoting French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre’s definition of anti-Semitism as fear of one’s own self, consciousness, and liberty.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. In this chapter, Rabbi Moffic relates several stories, many of them from his own experience, about anti-Semitism. Which of these stories provoked a strong reaction in you, and why? When, if ever, have you experienced prejudice and hatred unfairly directed at you? How does that experience help you empathize with what many Jews feel when confronted with anti-Semitism?
2. Moffic also identifies several stereotypes about Jews perpetuated by anti-Semitic speech and action. Which of these stereotypes are you aware of? How do you respond when you encounter them? Which stereotypes, if any, did Moffic call to your attention for the first time?
3. Moffic uses the concept of intersectionality to explain how “we are made up of multiple identities” that overlap (page 12). He criticizes anti-Semitism for forcing Jews to choose between their Jewishness and their other identities. Have you ever been expected or forced to choose between your identities? What happened?
4. According to Moffic, why did the 1967 Six-Day War mark the beginning of a shift in the American left’s sympathy and support for the state of Israel? Does his assessment of the Six-Day War’s significance as a turning point make sense to you? Why or why not?
5. How does Moffic define the term *Zionist*? How does his definition differ from an anti-Semitic definition? Why does Moffic say that asking Jews to give up Zionism “would be akin to asking Catholics to give up the Eucharist”? (page 9).
6. Moffic says that disproportionate and disproportionately negative media coverage about the state of Israel leads to the anti-Semitic idea that it is a society guilty of apartheid. What impression does the media coverage of Israel you see and hear give you about the nation? Do you think Moffic’s assessment is fair? Why or why not?

7. Moffic acknowledges “no obvious, bright line” “between reasonable political criticism and anti-Semitism” (page 6). In your own observations or experience, how do you tell the difference between reasonable criticism and hateful prejudice?

8. “Churches must be especially careful when talking about Israel,” Moffic writes, “because the state of Israel emerged out of Christian anti-Semitism” (page 25). How has the Christian church contributed, directly and indirectly, to anti-Semitism? How would you describe relationships between Jews and Christians in your community: close? strained? nonexistent? something else? What, if anything, is your congregation doing to contribute to the “nothing short of miraculous” reconciliation between the two groups Moffic identifies (page 26)?

Ideas for Further Study

- Watch the movie *Exodus* (1960). Do you find it an inspiring portrait of the Jewish spirit, as Moffic does; “Israeli propaganda,” as some of Professor Shaul Magid’s students did; or something else?
- For the next week, keep a journal of all news stories you see or hear—on TV, the radio, or the internet—about the state of Israel. How would you characterize the tone of each story: positive? negative? mixed? What statements, if any, of reasonable criticism of Israel does the story contain? What anti-Semitic statements or stereotypes, if any, does it contain?
- Review the Anti-Defamation League’s most recent report on anti-Semitic incidents (as of this writing, the 2017 report is at www.adl.org/resources/reports/2017-audit-of-anti-semitic-incidents). What in the report’s findings surprises you the most? How will you take action based on what you have learned?

Chapter 2

Mainstreaming Hate

Summary

In chapter 2, Rabbi Moffic explores the alt-right—a white nationalist, white supremacist movement hostile to both progressive and traditionally conservative political views—as a major reason our current era is the most anti-Semitic the United States has seen since the 1930s.

Moffic points to several reasons the alt-right targets Jews:

- **The alt-right is tribal.** It is an ethnocentric movement focused on “white identity” (page 36), which it believes Jews threaten from within. The alt-right contends Jews are loyal only to their own Jewish identity and “can never be true patriots” (page 38). It also believes Jews pave the way for other non-white populations to enter and threaten white America.
- **The alt-right is secular.** The alt-right is “postreligious” (page 42). Its rejection of religion includes not only Judaism but also Christianity, which it sees as corrupted by its Jewish origins and weakened by its “openness to people of any race or ethnicity” (page 43).
- **The alt-right is nationalist and isolationist.** It opposes open borders and immigration, and international quasi-governmental and financial institutions. It perpetuates old conspiracy theories about “an international cabal of Jews” (page 47) controlling global markets, as well as US foreign policy, which it believes benefits Israel too much.
- **The alt-right is anti-“elite.”** It condemns wealthy, powerful people and institutions who are ostensibly “architecting a new global order that will hurt real Americans” (page 47). The ranks of the “elite” aren’t clearly defined but invariably include high-profile Jews in politics, finance, and the media. In the alt-right worldview, Jews use both Wall Street and Hollywood to corrupt white American social structures and values.

Moffic argues that the alt-right’s anti-Semitism equates American identity not with a commitment to shared ideals and institutions but in white ethnicity. This equation makes the alt-right an especially serious, virulent threat to democracy’s fragile institutions, which “can collapse without awareness, resolve, and action” to preserve them (page 35).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. How do you react to the parallels Rabbi Moffic draws between Germany in 1933, when Hitler rose to power, and the United States today? Do you think it could happen here in America (pages 34–35)? Why or why not?
2. Before you read chapter 2, what did you know about the alt-right movement? What new information did you discover in this chapter? What questions do you still have about the alt-right?
3. Moffic explains that traditional conservative leaders like William F. Buckley rejected anti-Semitism because “they saw conservatism as a set of ideas, not an ethnic identity. They argued that America was not built on ethnicity but on ideas, and anyone committed to those ideas was welcome” (page 39). What do you think about this definition of America’s foundations?
4. Why, according to Moffic, do many Jews hear the phrase “Christian nation” when applied to the United States as anti-Semitic (page 39)? What does the phrase mean to you, and does it accurately describe America in your view? Why or why not?
5. How do you respond to Moffic’s discussion of Christian evangelism (pages 40–41)? To what extent should reflections like Moffic’s shape the way Christians, as individuals and congregations, share the gospel?
6. What is the doctrine of supersessionism, and how does Moffic say it contributes to anti-Semitism (pages 40–41)? What do you believe about the relationship between God in the Old Testament and in the New? Between the people of Israel and the church? Between Judaism and Christianity? How do these beliefs shape your relationships with Jews?
7. During the 1980s, according to Moffic, “Jews saw in the religious right an attempt to undermine the separation of church and state in America” (page 41). Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not? How much separation between church and state do you think is best for America?
8. Moffic states that the alt-right draws on “a deep reservoir of American suspicion of international groups” (page 46). Do you agree that this suspicion is embedded in America’s national identity? Why or why not?

How can we distinguish between it and the anti-Semitic anti-“elitism” Moffic describes?

9. What critique does Moffic make of alt-right leader Richard Spencer’s comparison of Jewish and white “self-preservation” (page 50)? What genuinely positive lessons can other peoples and cultures, including the church, learn from Jews’ preservation of a collective religious and philosophical identity in the face of pressure to abandon them and the threat of destruction?

10. How have historical circumstances contributed to Jewish representation in the American financial and entertainment industries? How can we recognize and combat stereotypes about Jews in these professions?

Ideas for Further Study

- Watch *Gentleman’s Agreement* (1947), a film Moffic offers as a traditionally conservative depiction of anti-Semitism of the past. How do you think the movie’s messages about prejudice and hatred hold up? How does the anti-Semitism seen in this film differ from alt-right anti-Semitism?
- Rabbi Moffic highlights the doctrine of supersessionism’s anti-Semitic effects. What does your denomination or tradition teach about the relationship between the people of Israel and the Christian church? Ask your pastor for help locating relevant statements, if needed.

Chapter 3

An Optimist Faces Reality

Summary

In chapter 3, Rabbi Moffic shares some of his personal experience with the “new climate of fear” (page 65) he sees confronting Jewish communities in the United States in the wake of renewed anti-Semitism. He calls guiding Jewish congregations through this unsettling era “the greatest challenge of [his] spiritual leadership” (page 64).

Moffic understands many Jews’ impulse to turn inward—to “circle the wagons and put up more fences” (page 65). He notes that this approach has helped Jews preserve their culture and their lives in the past, especially as it drove the Zionist movement’s growth in 1930s Germany.

But Moffic argues that Jewish Scripture and tradition teach that God calls Jews to look outward with “a feeling of universal responsibility” (page 67). He examines how Jewish outreach—“building ties with those of other faiths and sharing the wisdom of Judaism with people of all faiths” (page 67)—can be effective in combating anti-Semitism today.

In his own ministry, Moffic has found performing interfaith marriages an especially powerful way of challenging stereotypes and misconceptions about Jews, and of expanding Jewish symbols’ meaning and reach into wider American culture.

In today’s America, Moffic realizes, identifying as Jewish and practicing Judaism involve risk. He urges Jews to meet this risk as communities of persistence, hope, and openness. He cites the Torah’s call to Jews and non-Jews alike “to improve the world” (page 76), and identifies anti-Semitism as symptomatic of humanity’s general resistance to God’s universal moral law. He points to Christians he has met through his work interpreting Jesus’s Jewishness in churches as allies in fighting anti-Semitism.

It’s a fight we all must undertake with urgency, he concludes, because anti-Semitism “destroys societies. It lowers our moral, social, and political horizons. It dooms us to a world where the loudest and most hateful voices dominate” (page 79).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. When you feel afraid, do you tend to turn inward or outward? How have you experienced these two impulses as part of a community? Where do you see these impulses at work in larger American society?
2. Rabbi Moffic describes his dismay at finding the Jewish Community Center he remembers warmly from childhood “turned into a fortress”

because of the threat of violence (page 64). How have violence (actual or threatened) or other problems in society changed places or experiences from your childhood? How are these changes similar to and different from changes anti-Semitism brings to American Jewish communities?

3. As Moffic notes, God promised Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him (see Genesis 12:1-3; 22:15-18). Christians often read this promise as meaning Gentiles will find blessing through Jesus, Abraham's descendant (see Galatians 3:8-9). Does this interpretation complement or conflict with reading the promise as God's calling to act in the world with "a feeling of universal responsibility" (page 67)? Why?

4. Moffic distinguishes outreach from "urging people to come to synagogue and convert to Judaism" (page 67). How much of your congregation's outreach efforts are about urging people to come to church or convert to Christianity? How much, if at all, would they change to meet Moffic's definition of outreach? Would you support such changes? Why or why not?

5. Read Numbers 13:25-14:9. How do you react to Rashi's interpretation of this story: "strong people do not need high walls" (page 68)? What wisdom does this story hold for Jews and Christians challenging anti-Semitism today?

6. What is your personal experience of interfaith families? How do these relationships challenge misinformation, stereotypes, and prejudice?

7. Moffic mentions several Jewish symbols he believes help "make Judaism less foreign and more real" to people with no direct exposure to Jews or Judaism (pages 70-71). What Jewish symbols have you found meaningful, and why?

8. Recounting how some students at Posnack Jewish Day School responded to a bomb threat, Moffic writes, "They created a memory of community and persistence. They combated hate with hope" (page 74). How did ritual help those students live as that kind of community? How does ritual help your community of faith maintain its identity and live in hope?

9. How do you react to the Reverend Edward Flannery's suggestion that Jews are persecuted because of God's call "to improve the world" (page 76)? How is this idea similar to and different from New Testament

expectations of tension and conflict between Jesus's followers and the world (for example, John 16:33; Romans 12:2)? Can God's people communicate blessing to the world apart from God's "burdensome moral laws" (page 77)? Why or why not?

10. How would you have responded to the woman who told Moffic she wished she had been born Jewish so she "could live the way Jesus did" (page 78)?

Ideas for Further Study

- Research Gertrud Kolmar and read some of her poems. One good starting place is "Gertrud Kolmar" by Kirsten Krick-Aigner, Jewish Women's Archive Encyclopedia, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/kolmar-gertrud>. How did Kolmar's spirituality and her experience of the Shoah (the Holocaust) shape her work?
- Research and spend some time reading the *Pirkei Avot*. What is this book? Why is it important within Judaism? How do you find reading it like or unlike reading the Bible? What themes stand out to you as you read? How well can you know any religious community by reading its important writings?
- Moffic contrasts "insular" ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities with his own, "more porous" Reform Judaism (page 73). What different branches of Judaism are present in your local community? How much do you know about what distinguishes them from each other, as well as what they have in common?
- After quoting the Reverend Martin Niemöller's famous words about failing to speak up for the Nazis' victims, Moffic asks, "What would [Niemöller] say today?" (page 80). What do you think? What groups of people might Niemöller identify today as at risk, for whom other people need to speak out?

Chapter 4

The World's Oldest Hatred

Summary

In the third century BCE,¹ an Egyptian priest named Manetho told a version of the Exodus story in which Jews were “a deceitful people dedicated to undermining society wherever they live.” He was “the first prominent anti-Semite” (page 84).

In chapter 4, Rabbi Moffic discusses several reasons why anti-Semitism emerged in the ancient Hellenistic world:

- **Resistance to cultural conformity.** Jews adopted the Greek language and much Greek culture, but didn't abandon their distinctive religious practices, leading to hostility against them from the ruling culture.
- **Jewish belief in one God.** Jews' assertion of their one God's sovereignty denied all other gods' legitimacy, a stand putting them at odds with the rest of the ancient world.
- **Jews' self-perception as being chosen.** “Jews believe that God has chosen the Jews to be God's messenger to humanity,” and this belief, when misunderstood, “seems to imply a superiority” that caused resentment (page 88).
- **Insistence on “the dignity of difference.”** Jewish belief in chosenness implies God values difference. Moffic argues that Jews carry the message of what Rabbi Jonathan Sacks calls “the dignity of difference” to the world (page 92), but this message provokes hostility because it removes religious justification for persecuting others.
- **Sabbath observance.** Ancient writers accused Jews of laziness because Jews observed a weekly day of rest, but the Sabbath challenged deeper cultural ideals. It was a “weekly reminder of Jewish difference and community” (page 93). As a symbol of the perfect, messianic age to come, it critiques cyclical views of time in which humans never make progress. And because it equalizes all people before God, it rebukes hierarchical power relationships.

“What makes it reasonable to speak of hostility to the Jews as something unique?” asks Moffic (page 96). The answer is the way

1. BCE stands for “before the Common Era,” the era common to Jews and Christians. Many historians prefer it to the notation BC (before Christ) because it does not imply a statement of faith about Jesus. Similarly, they prefer CE (Common Era) to AD (*anno Domini*, “in the year of the Lord”).

anti-Semitism dehumanizes Jews. From Manetho's day to the present, anti-Semitism paints Jews as "unworthy of sharing in the common life and dignity of human society" (page 96).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. How do you react to Manetho's account of the Jews in Egypt (pages 74-75)? Rabbi Moffic writes, "Manetho was the first to portray Jews as 'the other,' as a group with deceptive motives—and that notion has underpinned anti-Semitic fantasies about Jews ever since" (page 98). Why do societies find it easy to believe stories like Manetho's about "the other" in their midst? How do we combat the dangerous consequences of such stories?

2. Why was Alexander the Great's defeat of the Persian Empire a turning point in Jewish history, and how did it set the stage for the rise of anti-Semitism (see page 87)?

3. Read Exodus 19:1-6. What does God's call to the Israelites to be God's "treasured possession out of all the peoples" mean (v. 5)? Moffic writes that the sense of chosenness is "a Jewish self-perception, not a statement of absolute truth about the universe" (page 89). What do you think about this interpretation? How could it shape the way Christians read New Testament passages that draw on the idea of chosenness, such as 1 Peter 2:9-10?

4. Moffic talks about his struggles reconciling Jewish chosenness with America's traditional emphasis on equality. He concludes, "What makes us different is essential to who we are" (page 90). Which of your distinctive characteristics—individually, as part of your family, or as a member of some larger community—do you consider essential to your identity? How far would you be willing to compromise them in order to be like other people?

5. "Difference is a divine gift," writes Moffic, "not a condition to overcome" (page 91). Do you agree? Why or why not?

6. Read Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15, two versions of God's commandment to observe the Sabbath. What reason does each version give for the commandment? Moffic explains how this commandment challenged ancient Hellenistic culture. How is the

Sabbath commandment countercultural today? What challenges you the most about keeping the Sabbath?

7. “In depicting the world as it could be if we all followed God’s commandments,” Moffic writes, “the Sabbath is a weekly reminder that the world is not yet what it could be” (page 94). How does or how could Christian worship function similarly? To what extent do you think Christians can share the hope Moffic expresses: if human beings “improve, change, and grow, . . . we will eventually reach a messianic age, a time of perfection, symbolized by the Sabbath” (page 94)?

8. Moffic notes that dehumanization doesn’t always happen in extreme ways: “When we assign motives and views to an individual purely on the basis of that person’s ethnic or religious identity, we are dehumanizing him or her” (page 97). When have you seen dehumanization taking place on this “less extreme” scale? How do you respond to it?

Ideas for Further Study

- As Rabbi Moffic points out, the Western Wall, or “Wailing Wall,” in Jerusalem is the only remaining portion of the Temple destroyed by Roman armies in 70 CE, the same Temple Jesus knew. Search online for videos of people praying at the Western Wall. What do these videos lead you to think and feel?
- Research Josephus, the Jewish historian who is our source for Manetho’s writings. Why do modern historians regard him as significant? How do they judge his reliability? What do his references to Jesus and James, which Moffic mentions, tell us?

Chapter 5

The Devil and the Jews

Summary

Rabbi Mofic explains how “Jesus symbolizes anti-Semitism” for many Jews. Although Jesus was a Jew and his first followers saw themselves as devout Jews, the church bearing Jesus’s name has a long, shameful history of slandering Jews, treating them with hatred, and killing them.

By the early fourth century CE, Christianity had completed its split from Judaism. It promoted several beliefs contributing to anti-Jewish attitudes and actions:

- **Charge of deicide.** Based on Gospel accounts, especially Matthew 27:24-25, many Christians believed Jews bore responsibility for Jesus’s death, even though crucifixion was a Roman execution. Since Christians believe Jesus was God incarnate, the charge was deicide, or killing God.
- **Replacement theology.** Based on New Testament texts like Hebrews 8:13, many Christians believed “the church and Christians have ‘superseded’ and replaced Jews and Judaism as God’s covenantal partner” (page 104). Believing the church is God’s “new Israel” is supersessionism.
- **Jewish suffering proves Christianity’s truth.** Many Christians believed Jewish suffering, beginning with Rome’s destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE, was God’s punishment for rejecting Jesus and proof that Christianity fulfills ancient promises.

Over the centuries, these anti-Jewish beliefs have helped drive anti-Jewish violence:

- **The Crusades.** Although Pope Urban II called the first Crusade in 1096 for Christians to take Palestine from Muslim control, crusading soldiers and mobs of local villagers alike attacked other non-Christians too, sometimes destroying whole Jewish communities.
- **Expulsions.** The anti-Jewish feeling the Crusades fueled in Europe led to mass expulsions of Jews from several European regions and countries in the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries.
- **Officially sanctioned mob violence.** From the Crusades through late nineteenth-century pogroms in Russia and Ukraine and such twentieth-century murders as the lynching

of Leo Frank in Atlanta, Georgia, authorities in church and society have often simply looked on and sometimes participated as mobs killed Jews.

Both medieval Catholic and early Protestant Christian culture also reinforced anti-Judaism in various ways, including:

- Depictions of Jews as “devils” in preaching and devotional art about Jesus’s crucifixion;
- The “blood libel,” or false charge that Jews ritually murdered Christian children and used their blood to celebrate Passover;
- The false charge that Jews desecrated the host—the consecrated wafer used in the Mass, believed by Roman Catholics to be Christ’s flesh—by stabbing and puncturing it as they (supposedly) tortured Jesus on the cross; and
- Martin Luther’s advocating the destruction of Jewish synagogues and homes and expelling Jews from where they lived, ideas that influenced Hitler and the Nazis more than four centuries later.

Moffic argues that persistent Christian anti-Semitism “was a way of blaming Jewish wickedness for persistent suffering” (page 115). “Christian self-reflection on the history of Christian anti-Semitism and violence toward Jews is doubtless painful,” he writes, “but the pain of reflection can lead us ultimately to a more meaningful spiritual life” (page 118).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. When, if ever, have you been aware of how talk about Jesus makes many Jews uncomfortable and upset, as it did the parents of the bride in the interfaith wedding Rabbi Moffic describes at this chapter’s beginning? What happened? How did you respond?
2. What reasons does Moffic give for Christianity’s gradual separation from Judaism (page 101)? How would you describe your own familiarity with Christianity’s Jewish roots? What could you do, on your own or as part of your congregation, to learn more?
3. Read Matthew 27:24-25. How has this text contributed to Christian anti-Semitism? How should the “horrible” consequences of these verses’

interpretation in history (page 103) shape how Christians read and interpret them today?

4. Read Hebrews 8:1-13. What contrast is the author trying to establish, and why? How has this contrast influenced a belief in supersessionism? How can Christians read and interpret this text without encouraging supersessionism today?

5. How did Augustine explain Jewish suffering throughout history (pages 105–106)? What have been the consequences of reducing Jewish suffering to an object lesson for the world in God’s truth and mercy? What resources does Christianity contain (from Scripture, doctrine, tradition) that could yield a different, more positive response to Jewish suffering?

6. Why did the Crusades lead to violence against Jews (pages 106–109)? How did “the murder of Jews [become] a self-perpetuating loop,” according to Moffic (page 108)? What lessons do twenty-first-century, North American Christians need to learn from the history of the Crusades, and why?

7. Read John 8:39-59. What claims does this text make about Jesus? How has what it says about Jesus’s adversaries contributed to Christian anti-Semitism? Does knowing that John generally uses the phrase “the Jews” to refer to those specific Jewish leaders who opposed Jesus during his ministry make this text less troubling or offensive? Why or why not?

8. Moffic describes how both the blood libel and the charge of host desecration were rooted in Christian devotion centered on Jesus’s suffering on the cross: “Through prayer and acts of piety, Christians were meant to imaginatively connect with Jesus’s own experience” (page 113). How can Christians today make that connection while avoiding the anti-Judaism that has often accompanied it in the past?

9. According to Moffic, “anti-Semitism is not, at its deepest core, about actual Jews” (page 115), but is about one group’s need to “scapegoat” another when it suffers (page 117). What other examples of scapegoating, in history or in present society, are you aware of? How has been, or should be, the church’s response to scapegoating?

10. To what extent can Christianity atone for its past anti-Semitism, and how? How does the church remain vigilant about anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism in its teachings and practice today?

Ideas for Further Study

- Chapter 5 contains many famous Christians through history you may recognize, but likely not for their anti-Semitic teachings. Research one or more of the following individuals:
 - Augustine, Bishop of Hippo
 - John Chrysostom
 - Martin Luther

For what accomplishments do Christians usually know these men? How should their anti-Semitic teachings influence Christians' estimation of them today?

- Research Leo Frank's life and death (pages 109–110). How was anti-Semitism a factor in what happened? How did American Jews, especially in the South, react to Frank's lynching? How is what happened to Leo Frank relevant to Jews and all Americans today?
- As the chapter ends, Rabbi Moffic describes a famous painting featuring contrasting depictions of the church and synagogue. Look online or in art books for other examples of this motif (sometimes known as *ecclesia* and *synagoga*) in paintings and sculpture. How does this common medieval motif illustrate Christian anti-Semitism? How should Christians and Jews react to this art today?

Chapter 6

Is Christianity Still Anti- Semitic?

Summary

In chapter 6, Rabbi Moffic traces the development of the “dangerous stereotype . . . that Christianity is a religion of love, and Judaism is a religion of law” (page 126).

He locates its beginning in Paul’s characterization of the Jewish Law as a barrier to faith in Jesus. Paul argued Jesus’s death and resurrection freed people from the impossible burden of perfectly obeying the Law. Gentiles (non-Jews) who accepted this truth were righteous, claimed Paul, while Jews who rejected it rejected Jesus’s gift and remained in sin. Paul’s strong, negative statements about the Law’s requirements still shape people’s idea of Judaism as a harsh and legalistic religion, a stereotype “rooted in a misunderstanding of Torah” (page 130).

Properly understood, Torah includes not only the Law revealed by God to Moses at Mount Sinai and written in the Five Books of Moses (the Pentateuch, the Bible’s first five books) but also the “oral Torah,” Judaism’s continuing conversation about how to put the Law into practice. These practices define Jewish identity: “Deed is more important than creed in Judaism” (page 127). When we consider how Jewish communities actually live out the Law, explains Moffic, we discover Jewish commitment to the Law does not conflict with a commitment to love. Jews can and do observe the Law without being vengeful or legalistic.

Jesus himself, always a devout Jew, never rejected the Law or Judaism. He cited the Law’s commandments to love God and neighbor as the greatest commandments. But centuries of Christian tradition have downplayed and obscured Jesus’s Jewishness. Moffic suggests that interfaith efforts to recover and better understand Jesus as a Jew can help “foster connection instead of distrust between Jews and Christians” today (page 135).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. How familiar are you with the stereotype Rabbi Moffic discovered among his own congregation, that Judaism is an inferior religion of law while Christianity is a superior religion of love? When, if ever, have you encountered it in your culture, your church, or your own experience?
2. Why does Moffic state, “Paul effectively severed Christianity from its Jewish roots” (page 129)? How does thinking of Paul’s teaching about the Law as an argument among Jews affect the way you read such

passages as Galatians 2:15-21? How does thinking about the Law as Moffic describes it—a set of God-given practices “at the core of being Jewish” (page 127)—help you appreciate why Judaism and Christianity ultimately separated?

3. What is the *lex talionis* and how does Jewish tradition interpret it (pages 130–31)? How does this interpretation contradict the stereotype of a harsh and legalistic Judaism? Why is it important to read the Law in the context of how communities put it into practice?

4. Read Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34, and Luke 10:25-28. Each of these passages recounts Jesus’s identification of Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 as the Law’s greatest commandments. How are the Gospel texts similar and different? What significance, if any, do you find in comparing and contrasting them? What does the fact that Matthew, Mark, and Luke all recorded some version of this incident suggest about its importance and about Jesus’s attitude toward the Torah?

5. “Deed is more important than creed in Judaism,” writes Moffic (page 127). Do you think the reverse is true in Christianity—that creed is more important than deed? Why or why not? Based on your knowledge of the Gospels, how would you describe Jesus’s view of the relationship between deed and creed?

6. Why does Moffic say that the statement, “Everyone knows Jesus was Jewish” is only half-true (page 134)? To what extent have you been taught about Jesus’s Jewishness in your own experience? What does your church do, or what could it be doing, to teach people more about Jesus’s Jewishness?

7. Moffic writes, “It is when we recognize the way faith shapes our own lives that we better appreciate the way it enriches the lives of others” (page 136). How have you found this to be true? How do, or how could, closer interfaith relationships among Jews, Christians, and others benefit your community?

8. Moffic concludes the story about the Torah scroll at North Park Christian Seminary by stating, “God works—and builds bridges—in mysterious ways” (page 138). What unexpected bridges between people of different faiths have you seen God build, and how?

Ideas for Further Study

- Rabbi Moffic points to a long tradition of erasing Jesus's Jewishness in Western Christian art. Take a tour of your church building looking for images of Jesus. How many of these images depict Jesus as a clearly Jewish man? Do you agree that if Christian art had more often depicted Jesus as Jewish, "we would have seen less anti-Semitism" (page 135)? Why or why not?
- Moffic briefly discusses the proper and improper use of the adjective *Talmudic* (page 133). Do some research on the Talmud. What is it? How is it written? How is it part of the oral Torah?
- Look online for pictures and videos of Torah scrolls. How does the care and attention involved in creating and preserving a Torah scroll speak to Jewish reverence for God's Word?

Chapter 7

“He Jewed Me Down”

Summary

Rabbi Moffic explores several historic, social, and psychological reasons behind “the enduring stereotype of the greedy, unscrupulous Jew” (page 143).

He identifies misinterpretations of stories about Jesus overturning money changers’ tables in the Temple as one source for the stereotype. Jesus wasn’t opposed to money changing itself but, as were other Jewish leaders, to profiting from the system at poor people’s expense. But anti-Semites abused the story to characterize all Jews as wealthy, greedy, corrupt, and deceptive.

The medieval church’s prohibition of usury (lending money at interest) reinforced the stereotype because it left moneylending as one of the few professions open to Jews. Consequently, Jews suffered as scapegoats in times of economic trouble. As a “middleman minority” (page 148), profiting from the sale of goods they didn’t produce by loaning money to both buyers and sellers, Jews unfairly bore blame and resentment for high prices and economic downturns, facing theft, mob violence, forced baptisms and conversion, even death.

Moffic discusses in detail how Shylock, the title character in *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare, embodies multiple anti-Semitic stereotypes that flourished during Europe’s shift from feudalism to capitalism. A Jewish moneylender, Shylock demands a pound of flesh from a Christian who can’t repay a loan. “This play leaves the impression that Jews are merciless, greedy, vengeful, and desirous of Christian blood,” writes Moffic, “and it captures many elements of traditional and modern anti-Semitism: not just the desire for vengeance and an overarching greed, but also stubbornness, a lack of commitment to the state, and a sense of superiority” (page 152).

Moffic also identifies “independence-dependence conflict” as a psychological dynamic underpinning economic anti-Semitism (page 155). Christian Europe’s growing economy depended on Jewish moneylending, in some ways paralleling Christianity’s theological and historical dependence upon Judaism. Both dependencies fostered resentment. “Like Shylock,” Moffic writes, “Jews are essential, and they are hated” (page 156).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Rabbi Moffic describes how he saw the “greedy Jew” stereotype in media coverage of the Bernard Madoff investment scandal and during

commercials in the 2016 US presidential campaign. When have you seen this stereotype in media and culture? How do you respond when you see it?

2. Read the Gospels' accounts of Jesus overturning money changers' tables in the Temple (Matthew 21:12-16; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-48; John 2:13-22). As Moffic notes, "This story appears in all four Gospels, indicating its importance" (page 144). Why is this story important to Christians? How does understanding the role money changers played in the system of Temple worship guard against anti-Semitic interpretations of this story? How should Christians teach and preach this story today in ways that don't encourage the "greedy Jew" stereotype?

3. How does Jewish interpretation of Torah allow Jews to loan money at interest, according to Moffic? Where in the New Testament do you see Jesus, as a devout first-century Jew, interpreting Torah according to the same principle, that "a means of saving lives trumps almost every commandment" (page 146)?

4. Although "Jews were not noticeably wealthier than other groups" in medieval Europe (page 147), they became the target of resentment and violence during economically difficult periods. Why does money have such power to spark hatred against other people? What groups of people do you see being scapegoated for economic problems today? What responsibility does the church have to speak and act against economic scapegoating?

5. How did the fact that "Jews lacked a homeland for almost two thousand years" (page 150) shape the Jewish experience of being a middleman minority (see also pages 137-38)? What factors put ethnic minorities at risk of being scapegoated in today's world?

6. What specific stereotypes about Jews does *The Merchant of Venice* perpetuate, according to Moffic? How do these stereotypes reflect Europe's shift from feudalism to capitalism? Do you think modern theaters should still produce the play? If so, what, if anything, should they do about its anti-Semitic elements? If not, why not?

7. According to Moffic, seventeenth-century Calvinism "saw worldly success as a sign of divine favor" (page 154). How did this emphasis on material wealth as God's blessing reinforce rather than reduce the "greedy Jew" stereotype? Where have you seen Christians teaching

similar ideas about material wealth today? What do you think about these teachings?

8. “We often hate those on whom we depend,” writes Moffic, “because they symbolize our lack of independence” (page 155). Where have you seen this dynamic at work in the world and society, or in your own life? What are some healthy and productive ways of dealing with it? How is the church in a unique position to reduce anti-Semitism motivated by independence-dependence conflict, and what practical steps can it take to do so?

Ideas for Further Study

- Discussing psychological projection as a reason for anti-Semitism—the idea that anti-Semites “see Jews as embodying traits they dislike in themselves” (page 148)—Rabbi Moffic mentions Alfred Dreyfus in passing. Who was Dreyfus? What was the Dreyfus affair, and how does it exemplify anti-Semitic projection?
- Research anti-Semitism in the writings of John Calvin. How would you characterize his attitude toward Jews in Scripture and in his own day?
- Watch the 2004 film version of *The Merchant of Venice*, starring Al Pacino as Shylock. How does this film deal with anti-Semitic elements in Shakespeare’s play?

Chapter 8

“A Messianic Promise and a Demonic Reality”

Summary

Rabbi Moffic titles this chapter with a quote from Rabbi Jonathan Sacks about the Enlightenment, but the contrast it captures also summarizes the modern era (the late seventeenth through the twentieth centuries) as a whole. Many elements of modernity could have reduced anti-Semitism; however, the world’s oldest hatred only changed and intensified during the ascendancy of reason and science.

A new way of organizing society, the nation-state, offered a welcome alternative to the church-dominated religious allegiances that led to the Thirty Years’ War. But defining a people by its land rather than its faith did not make Jews more accepted or safer. Instead, the church’s “purity-of-blood doctrine introduced a racial element into what had once been only a religious hatred” (page 165). Once non-Jews started thinking of Jews as another race, they concluded Jews could never truly belong to a nation-state’s people—even though, as a result of forced migrations in earlier centuries, Jews were as deeply attached to many places as were non-Jews.

The French Revolution (began 1789) exemplified nationalism’s tendency to regard Jews as “others” who could never truly belong. Because Judaism is a way of life, French Jews could not draw the sharp line between religion and nationality that the revolutionaries drew. If Jews refused to abandon dietary laws, Sabbath observance, and other practices defining their community, they faced a stark choice: “Change your ways or leave our country” (page 169).

In central and eastern Europe, nationalist anti-Semitism led to the forced segregation of Jews in ghettos and pogroms (tacitly or explicitly state-supported violence against Jewish communities). The intensifying nationalism culminating in the Russian Revolution (1917) prompted two million Jews to emigrate to the United States, Britain, and Palestine.

Enlightenment philosophies rejected Christianity but did nothing to alleviate hatred of Jews. The Enlightenment advocated “universalism”—the belief that reason and science would erase all cultural distinctions in favor of commonly held ideals. Jews’ distinctive beliefs and customs inherently challenged universalism, leading Voltaire and other leading thinkers to dehumanize Jews in their writings.

The “science” of eugenics sought “a scientific basis for physical and mental traits associated with a group” (page 176) and cloaked anti-Semitism in the guise of objective research, targeting Jews “not on the basis of what they believe but on who they are” (page 177). And stating anti-Semitism as a “scientific problem” allowed, tragically, for Hitler

and the Nazis' "scientific solution": an "organized, bureaucratic, and systematic genocide" (page 181), made possible only because so many political, intellectual, and cultural forces in modernity combined to dehumanize Jews.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Reflecting on Jewish experience during the age of Enlightenment and emancipation, Rabbi Moffic writes, "Freedom in theory did not mean equality in practice" (page 162). When and where else in history has this disconnect occurred? How are these experiences similar to and different from the Jewish experience?

2. Moffic traces how the Inquisition-era church doctrine of *limpieza de sangre*, "purity of blood," still manifests itself in suspicions about Jews' true identities and loyalties today. What makes this doctrine "critical in understanding the destructiveness of anti-Semitism in the modern era" (page 165)? How can identifying Judaism as an "immutable" racial identity give non-Jews license to hate them? When have you been aware of "the dual-loyalties suspicion" (page 172) being used against Jews (in public life or people you personally know) today?

3. "The Hebrew Bible itself," Moffic points out, "does not even have a word for *religion* or *Judaism* because the biblical world did not separate religion from nationality" (page 168). Did this fact surprise you? Why or why not? How does (or how should) this lack of distinction shape the way people of faith in a secular democracy think about the relationship between these two concepts today? What does it suggest about how we should define our identities?

4. How does the Enlightenment idea of universalism dehumanize people? Why were Jews accused of a "supposedly inadequate commitment" to it? How does Judaism's philosophical universalism, as Moffic explains it, avoid the same dehumanizing tendency (see pages 175–76)?

5. How did the "science" of eugenics reinforce anti-Jewish stereotypes and prejudice, and how did it help lay the foundation for the Holocaust (see pages 175–77)? Where do you hear suspicion and hatred of others being given a supposedly "scientific" basis in society today? How can concerned people of faith help discredit "scientific" theories of ethnic superiority and inferiority?

6. Moffic identifies five persistent myths about the Holocaust (page 184):

- It never happened.
- It happened (at least in part), but Hitler left it unfinished.
- It happened, and Jews deserved it.
- It happened, and now Jews are the new Nazis, murdering Palestinians.
- It happened, and Jews get special treatment because of it today.

Which of these myths have you heard repeated in media and culture? How can we actively refute them?

7. Why did Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel say the Holocaust is a problem for human beings, not for God (see page 180)? Do you agree? Why or why not?

8. Moffic says Hitler's anti-Semitism differed from traditional Christian anti-Semitism because it was opposed to Jewish belief in the people's equality, a belief grounded in God creating human beings with dignity and in God's image (Genesis 1:26): "By articulating the idea that everyone equally bears God's image, Jews brought disorder and alarming instability into society" (page 182). How do you react to this interpretation of Hitler's motivation? Where do you see evidence that belief in each person's God-given dignity continues to trouble "the strongest" who enjoy a supposedly "natural dominance" in society today?

9. For Moffic, the modern era proves "education and reason are not the solution to prejudice" (page 177). "Thinking and learning from others is essential," he writes. "Yet, a faith—a commitment to a set of values with human dignity at its core—matters more" (page 179). How can Christians highlight the commitment to human dignity that our faith inherited from Judaism to become more effective activists against anti-Semitism?

Ideas for Further Study

- Search the internet or history books for information about and pictures of European Jewish ghettos. How did the ghettos both rise from and reinforce anti-Semitism?
- Find and listen to a recording online of Diane Rehm's 2015 interview with Bernie Sanders, which Moffic discusses (page

172). What is your reaction to the interview? How might Jews and non-Jews hear this interview differently? How does the interview demonstrate the persistence of the “dual loyalty” stereotype of Jews today?

- Find and watch videos about Yad Vashem: The World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem online (www.yadvashem.org/). How does the Center depict the dehumanization Jews suffered before and during the Holocaust, as well as Jewish efforts to assert their humanity in the face of genocide? What thoughts and feelings do these videos stir in you?

Chapter 9

Islam, Israel, and Anti- Semitism

Summary

Until Islamic anti-Semitism emerged in the nineteenth century, “Jews had more opportunities and freedoms in Muslim countries than in Christian ones” (page 187). Although Jews were “second-class citizens” (page 193) and intolerance and violent persecution did occur, Jewish culture and influence also flourished.

But when Europeans became an imperial presence in Muslim countries, the anti-Semitism they brought with them took hold. Muslims came to identify Jews, Rabbi Moffic argues, with “Western culture and globalization and the forces seeming to undermine Muslim sovereignty and values” (page 194). The Zionist movement—the effort to establish a Jewish state in Palestine—further heightened tensions because the rising number of immigrants to Palestine in the early twentieth century wanted a self-sufficient Jewish national homeland.

In 1948, the newly created state of Israel survived a war with neighboring Arab nations. In 1967, it gained control of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Sinai desert in the Six-Day War. This victory, and the sovereignty it gave Israel over Palestine, meant Jews were “the most powerful country in the Middle East” (page 197), a development creating resentment and anger among Muslims.

Moffic highlights three central expressions of Islamic anti-Semitism:

- **Rejecting Israel’s legitimacy.** Islamic anti-Semites argue Judaism is a religion, not a nation and a culture whose people have a claim to a particular land.
- **Perpetuating the blood libel.** Islamic anti-Semites repeat the lie that Jews use human blood in their festivals. The charge calls Israel’s moral legitimacy—and, therefore, its right to exist—into question (see pages 203–204).
- **Criticizing Israel’s commitment to human rights.** Unlike legitimate political disagreements, Islamic anti-Semitic talk of human rights abuses disguises hatred, accusing Israel of “racism, apartheid, ethnic cleansing, attempted genocide, and crimes against humanity” (page 205).

Moffic urges readers to shape more positive interactions between Jews and Muslims in America by:

- Exposing and rejecting fear and prejudice toward Muslims (Islamophobia) to build alliances with moderate and progressive Muslim communities;

- Studying sacred texts with and sharing fellowship in the home with each other to create “robust and sustained dialogue” (page 207); and
- Supporting each other in times of need and working together for the good of the whole community.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Rabbi Moffic notes one reason conflict between Jews and Muslims has been intense is because they “are connected as family, and family conflicts can last for a long time” (page 189). Read the family story of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, and Ishmael—progenitor of the Arabs—in Genesis 16 and 21:8-21. How would you answer some of the questions Rabbi Moffic asks (on page 188) about this story? What else would you ask? Why doesn’t the Bible answer all the questions this story raises? How could Jews, Muslims, and Christians ask questions about this story together as a way of claiming common ground?

2. Based on Moffic’s descriptions, how would you characterize the Jewish-Muslim relationship prior to the nineteenth century? How surprised were you to read that Jews usually fared better in Muslim countries than in Christian ones? Why?

3. How did Zionism mirror Europe’s rising nationalism in the modern era (see chapter 8), and how was it different? Why is understanding the birth of the modern state of Israel so important for understanding Islamic anti-Semitism? How does knowing something about modern Israel’s foundation shape or reshape your perspective on Arab-Israeli conflict today?

4. Why does Moffic call the claim that “Judaism is solely a religion” (page 199) anti-Semitic, and how does he refute it? Do you think Christianity is “solely a religion?” Why or why not? How are your church’s cultural activities similar to and different from a synagogue’s? What makes the Jewish perspective on religion, culture, and peoplehood, as Moffic expresses it, unique?

5. Have you heard Israel described as an aggressor against human rights (see page 205)? Why does Moffic say such language moves beyond “legitimate political disagreement” into anti-Semitism (pages 205-206)? Spend some time skimming news articles about Israel and human

rights from reputable print and online sources. How do you distinguish between legitimate issues and anti-Semitic myth in the coverage?

6. How have you been aware of Islamophobia in the United States, especially in the years since 9/11? How can Christians act as allies to both Muslims and Jews in resisting efforts to scapegoat these communities? What does your church do (or what could it be doing) to combat Islamophobia?

7. Moffic commends interfaith cooperation for the whole community's good as a way to reduce anti-Semitism. How does your church participate with Jews and Muslims in efforts to serve your local community? How are you seeking to cultivate relationships and friendships with Jews and Muslims?

Ideas for Further Study

- Research what the Quran, Islam's sacred text, teaches about Abraham and Ishmael. How is it similar to and different from what the Bible teaches? What difference could understanding different approaches to Jews and Muslims' shared family story make in reducing prejudice and hatred?
- Rabbi Moffic mentions Maimonides as one who "experienced both the highs and lows of Jewish-Muslim relations" (pages 191–92). Research his life and most notable achievements. Why is he regarded as "the greatest Jewish sage of the Middle Ages" (page 191)?
- Read and research the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the 1948 Israeli Declaration of Independence. What did these documents accomplish? What insights do they give you into the founding of modern Israel?

Chapter 10

George Washington's Vision

Summary

Having described anti-Semitism's history and current manifestations, Rabbi Moffic, in his final chapter, asks whether and how the world can move beyond it.

Moffic points out correlations of low anti-Semitism with periods of stability (as in eleventh-century Spain, seventeenth-century Holland, and nineteenth-century America), and high anti-Semitism with periods of instability. Resurgent anti-Semitism “signals deeper divisions and problems in America and the world” (pages 216–17). Moffic highlights several factors society must strengthen to fight it:

- **Effective politics.** Acknowledging the Bible's skepticism of human political institutions, Moffic also lifts up the Jewish conviction that effective government can help us “curb the worst within us” (page 219). When conducted with respect and civility, politics enable a diverse society to live at peace. Moffic proposes the United States adopt mandatory national service as Israel has in order to expose young people to others from different backgrounds, and require political leaders annually to debate an issue from “the other side,” thus encouraging empathy for other points of view.
- **Civil society.** Moffic attributes much of today's harsh divisions to declining participation in non-governmental institutions and organizations where people from different backgrounds work and play together. When civil society is strong, it forms “a bulwark against anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry... Social and communal ties protect us all from the worst ravages of harm” (pages 223–24).
- **Communal morality grounded in religion.** While Moffic doesn't want Western governments promoting religions, he points out religious leaders and communities, for all their faults (including, in Christianity and Islam, promoting anti-Semitism), can cultivate moral literacy in powerful ways. Religion can inspire sacrifice for ideals like dignity, respect, and freedom.

Moffic concludes by quoting George Washington: “And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion” (page 227). Washington, says Moffic, believed faith fosters

national “commitment to the ideals of tolerance and human dignity that have created a culture of freedom and progress” (page 227).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Rabbi Moffic contends “the fate of the Jews is connected to the fate of all people” (page 217). What have you discovered in Moffic’s book that supports his claim? What specific contributions, if any, do you think Christian faith and practice can make to draw greater attention to the connection between Jews’ and all people’s fates?
2. Read 1 Samuel 8, a text Moffic says exemplifies the Bible’s “healthy suspicion of leaders and ideologies” (page 218). Why does God tell Samuel to warn the Israelites about their desire for a king? When have you seen Samuel’s warning about powerful leaders borne out in modern political life, in the United States or elsewhere? Then compare and contrast the quote from *Pirkei Avot* (page 219) with Paul’s teaching about government in Romans 13. How do Christians honor both biblical suspicion of and support for human political authority in our lives as citizens today? How do we encourage our government to support policies that give anti-Semitism less room to take root?
3. How do you respond to Moffic’s proposal of mandatory service in the United States? What about his proposal to have political leaders debate the other side of an issue? What practical proposals would you suggest were you asked to devise ways to “create communities in which people of different faiths and opinions know one another and live in relationships of mutual respect” (page 222)?
4. How involved are you, or have you been, in civil society as Moffic describes it? How has that involvement exposed you to and helped you build relationships with people who are different from you? What ideas do you have for encouraging more involvement in civil society?
5. Do you agree with Moffic that religious communities can do more to stop anti-Semitism than governments or other organizations? Why or why not?
6. “Without a foundation in faith,” writes Moffic, “the culture of freedom and human dignity forged in the West will diminish” (page 226). Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? What practical consequences does this statement have for communities of faith?

7. Moffic tells stories in this chapter of how his grandfather's experiences inspire hope that anti-Semitism can be overcome. What personal experiences give you hope for a world healed of anti-Semitism?

8. What concrete steps will you personally take to combat anti-Semitism as a result of reading and studying *First the Jews*? What efforts would you like to see your congregation pursue, and how will you help plan and lead them?

Ideas for Further Study

- Find examples online or in art books from “the great series of paintings by Rembrandt of several leading Jews in Holland” (page 217). What interests you about or appeals to you in the images, and why? Research some of Rembrandt's subjects, as well as continued interest in the painter's connection to Jews and Judaism.
- Research Baruch Spinoza, the Jewish Dutch philosopher Rabbi Moffic mentions as a prominent Renaissance thinker (page 217). What are some highlights of his life and achievements? What can you discover about the range of Jewish views of Spinoza today?
- Watch *Biloxi Blues* (1988). How does it portray anti-Semitism, as well as the ways personal relationships can overcome it, to varying degrees?
- Read George Washington's entire letter to the Jews of Newport, Rhode Island in 1790. Why is this letter significant for Jews in America? Why is it significant for the entire nation? What guidance does it offer Americans working to overcome anti-Semitism today?