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Antisemitism is the term for the hatred of Jews as a group or a concept.

Hatred of Jews has existed since ancient times. Many scholars argue that antisemitism is distinguished from other hatreds because of its origin in religious rivalry. Early Christianity blamed Jews for the death of Jesus Christ and branded Jewish people as the "children of Satan." The belief that the Jews are related to the devil and are evil is not found in other hatreds, and still exists in the modern world despite the fact that much of the modern world is secular. Even in non-religious settings, the related idea that Jews are driven by immoral purposes is a persistent and damaging stereotype.

In the nineteenth century antisemitism was influenced by developing science, which defined people as belonging to different and distinct "races," one of which was the "Semitic race." The word "antisemitism" was coined in Germany by political activist Wilhelm Marr to represent this newer way of thinking. "Semitism" supposedly expressed all things Jewish, since at the time national groups were frequently defined by their language and the traditional language of Jews is Hebrew, which is classified as a "Semitic" language. Of course, there is no such thing as "Semitism" and all speakers of Semitic languages have never all belonged to the same national or ethnic groups. For this reason, many organizations spell "antisemitism" without a hyphen, which is how it is spelled here.

Antisemitism can be rhetorical or expressed through words or ideas. It can also be physical or expressed through violence against Jewish people and/or their property, including synagogues and other Jewish community institutions. Antisemitism, whether rhetorical or physical, can also be targeted at non-Jewish individuals and those who are perceived to be Jewish or allies to Jewish people.

Antisemitism may take the form of religious teachings that proclaim the inferiority of Jews, their supposedly evil nature, or other negative ideas about Jews. It may include political efforts to isolate, oppress, or otherwise injure them. It may also include prejudiced or other stereotyped views about Jews derived from racial or other ideologies.

Source: Parts of this definition have been adapted from International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (2016, May 26) Working Definition of Antisemitism. Retrieved from holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism.