



# A Lethal Obsession: Anti-semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad

By S. W. Wistrich



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In this unprecedented work two decades in the making, leading historian Robert S. Wistrich examines the long and ugly history of anti-Semitism, from the first recorded pogrom in 38 BCE to its shocking and widespread resurgence in the present day. As no other book has done before it, *A Lethal Obsession* reveals the causes behind this shameful and persistent form of hatred and offers a sobering look at how it may shake and reshape the world in years to come.

Here are the fascinating and long-forgotten roots of the “Jewish difference”—the violence that greeted the Jewish Diaspora in first-century Alexandria. Wistrich suggests that the idea of a formless God who passed down a universal moral law to a chosen few deeply disconcerted the pagan world. The early leaders of Christianity increased their strength by painting these “superior” Jews as a cosmic and satanic evil, and by the time of the Crusades, murdering a “Christ killer” had become an act of conscience.

Moving seamlessly through centuries of war and dissidence, *A Lethal Obsession* powerfully portrays the creation of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, the fateful anti-Semitic tract commissioned by Russia’s tsarist secret police at the end of the nineteenth century—and the prediction by Theodor Herzl, Austrian founder of political Zionism, of eventual disaster for the Jews in Europe.

The twentieth century fulfilled this dark prophecy, with the horrifying ascent of Hitler’s Third Reich. Yet, as Wistrich disturbingly suggests, the end of World War II failed to neutralize the “Judeophobic virus”: Pogroms and prejudice continued in Soviet-controlled territories and in the Arab-Muslim world that would fan flames for new decades of distrust, malice, and violence.

Here, in pointed and devastating detail, is our own world, one in which jihadi terrorists and the radical left blame Israel for all global ills. In his concluding chapters, Wistrich warns of a possible nuclear “Final Solution” at the hands of Iran, a land in which a formerly prosperous Jewish community has declined in both fortunes and freedoms.

Dazzling in scope and erudition, **A Lethal Obsession** is a riveting masterwork of investigative nonfiction, the definitive work on this unsettling yet essential subject. It is destined to become an indispensable source for any student of world affairs.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **From Booklist**

An indisputably serious problem with global ramifications deserves an equally serious and comprehensive treatment. Modern Jewish historian Wistrich has provided just that in his masterful dissection of the origins, the dissemination, and the consequences of anti-Semitism in all of its most blatant and most subtle manifestations. Though the size and the scope of this treatise may be initially daunting, intrepid readers will be rewarded by the clarity of the scholarly presentation. Arguing that anti-Semitism in our post-World War II world has returned with a vengeance and is, perhaps, more widespread and virulent than ever, he traces the ever-broadening roots of what he considers the “oldest and darkest of ideological obsessions.” No matter what political or ideological slants readers might bring to the table, this is a significant, wide-ranging discourse on the topic of anti-Semitism that cannot and should not be ignored. Wistrich has painstakingly done his homework and laid out his analysis, providing plenty of food for thought and discussion. --Margaret Flanagan

### **Review**

"A monumental and encyclopedic work—one of the most compelling studies of anti-Semitism past and present that I have read. It is likely to become the seminal work on the subject—a must for scholars of hate and anti-Semitism." —Irwin Cotler, MP: Former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada; Professor of Law, McGill University

"A message of this remarkable work is that the Holocaust did not only discredit anti-Semitism. In a sinister way, the murder of six million Jews has also inspired fantasies of completing what the Third Reich had begun, and has led to widespread defamation of Israel by equating its policies with Nazism. The grim case that Robert Wistrich advances in **A Lethal Obsession** is overwhelming. In the awesome scale of its research, in its moral and literary force, and in its compelling political urgency, there is no book quite like it."—Stephen J. Whitfield, Professor of American Civilization, Brandeis University.

"This is a splendid work of history. A masterpiece."—Jonathan Israel, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton

"Robert Wistrich's work is a monument to scholarship, precision, and passion. It is likely to become the single most essential treatment of anti-Semitism for all those who seek to understand it and combat it." —Ron Rosenbaum, author of *Explaining Hitler*

"At the heart of Wistrich's book is a holistic and global approach that seeks to analyze and understand the evolution of a "culture of hatred" that has continued to dehumanize Jews until this very day. Intrigued by its uncanny ability to adapt, the author masterfully explores the various mutations of anti-Semitism where it connects with contemporary social and political crises. This book contains valuable new information and insights and is bound to become indispensable for the study of anti-Semitism world wide."—Jehuda Reinharz, Richard Koret Professor of Modern Jewish History and President, Brandeis University

"In this major work of historical synthesis, Robert Wistrich offers abundant evidence that genocidal anti-Semitism, and apologetics and indifference about it is not only a matter of the history of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. Rather it remains a key element of contemporary affairs. **A Lethal Obsession**, the result of years of scholarship, presents a profound and incisive interpretation of anti-Semitism both before and after 1945.

Wistrich offers remarkable, and infuriating details of the persistence and permutation of this hallucinatory set of ideas within Europe as well as in the Middle East, North Africa and Iran, He writes with the interpretive grasp of a historian of the first rank as well as with the passion and urgency that is so essential in the face of the genocidal threats made against Israel and the Jews in recent years. It is both a major work of enduring scholarly value as well as a much needed reminder to political leaders and citizens of the profound danger posed by the advocates of the delusions that anti-Semitism has fostered in the past and continues to foster in the present."—Jeffrey Herf, author of *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* and *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* and professor of Modern European History, University of Maryland, College Park

#### About the Author

Robert S. Wistrich is professor of modern European history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and head of its Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism. Previously, he held the Jewish Chronicle Chair of Jewish Studies at University College London and was visiting professor of history at Brandeis and Harvard universities. A regular contributor to the *Times Literary Supplement*, he is the author of many books, including *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred*, and scripted the PBS television series of the same name.

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experience of reading a book. The author style to spell out the idea is very unique. Should you try to find new book to learn, this book very suitable to you. The book A Lethal Obsession: Anti-semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad is much recommended to you to learn. You can also get the e-book in the official web site, so you can easier to read the book.

**Amy Quist:**

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