

# War Against Antisemitism

## A Declaration of War Against a Lethal Irrationality

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You have very likely heard about it by now, but for those who didn't: Kanye West doubled down on his antisemitism and went as far as praising Adolf Hitler during a segment of Alexander Jones show (the conspiracy theorist who denied the Sandy Hook shooting and was sued for it) . During a time where antisemitism is already on the rise, he decided to nurture this destructive and dangerous fire with a truck load of gasoline.

It is a democratic and humanitarian duty to oppose antisemitism, especially after all the suffering, destruction and death it brought upon the world in the form of Nazism.

This war must be fought both with words and deeds - from dismantling prejudices to preventing antisemitic attacks. It is a task of civil society and the government.

**Note:** I began writing this blog entry in early December.

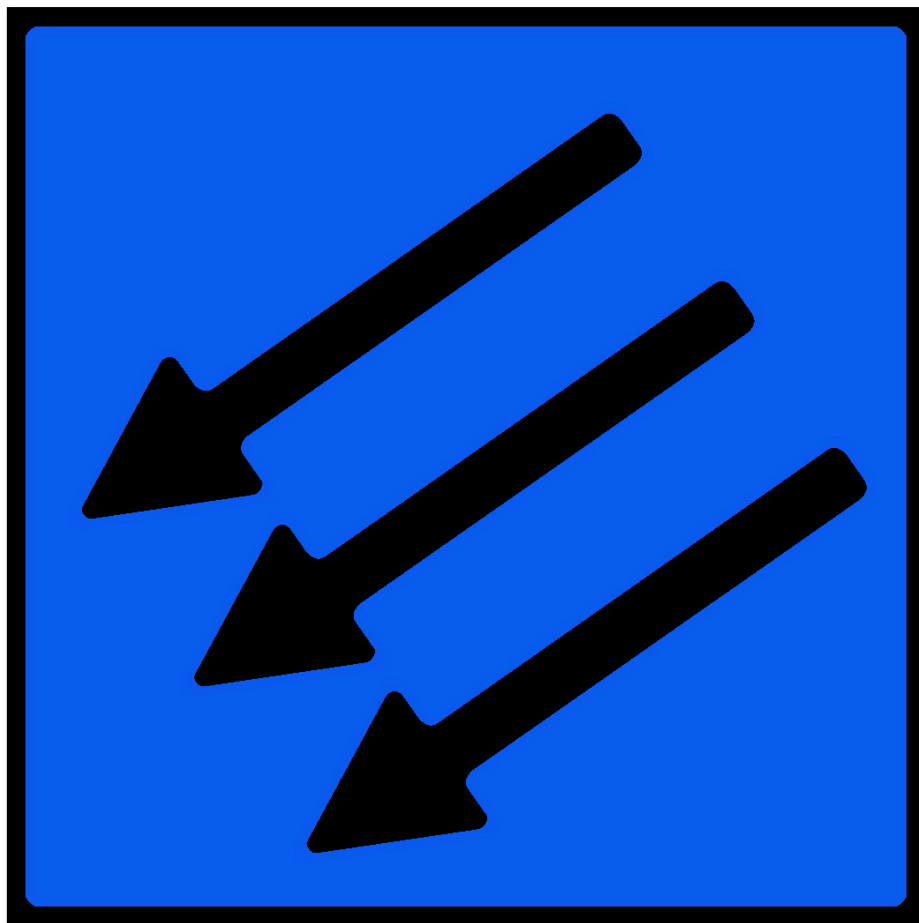


Illustration 1- In 1931, the Iron Front was founded in Germany by the Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold, the Allgemeiner Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes (ADGB), the Allgemeinen freien Angestelltenbundes (Afa-Bund), the SPD and the Arbeiter-Turn- und Sportbundes. It didn't understand itself as an organization, but as an alliance against political forces that were hostile towards the German republic, especially the National Socialists.

I think it is time to revive this idea, both to fight enemies of our democracies and bigotry, such as antisemitism and racism. For this reason I chose it as the cover picture (only the colour red changed to blue to emphasize democracy).

# Preamble

Antisemitism is abhorrent, senseless and immoral!

A religious community used as a scapegoat for centuries, only to end in the catastrophe we know as the Holocaust and the Second World War.

As the introduction in the beginning already revealed, Kanye West's antisemitic rants was the match that lit up the powder keg inside of me. He had an audience of 30 million people on Twitter (followers) - before [he was suspended](#) -, assuming he "only" reached 0.5-1% of them with his antisemitism and conspiracy theories, it means there are 150,000 to 300,000 people who may now see themselves either as confirmed in their prejudices or - in case of the younger ones - even attracted to antisemitic groups and ideas.

Then there's the takeover of Twitter by Elon Musk whose dislike for content moderation along with the mass firing of employees already led to disastrous results.

As the embedded article explains: *"On Friday, the New York Times [reported](#) new findings from the Center for Countering Digital Hate, the Anti-Defamation League and other organizations that monitor social media. According to the findings, within two weeks of Musk's takeover, antisemitic posts increased by more than 61%"*

Whether it is religious, social/political or racial antisemitism - all forms are loathsome, especially the later that is still perpetuated by the far-right. Those who deliberately spread antisemitic stereotypes and conspiracy theories to further their agenda deserve to be shunned and deplatformed. By rehashing these old antisemitic lies, the antisemites speak in the chorus of the past as well - of those who sought to destroy or oppress Jews throughout the centuries.

When antisemites spread hatred against Jews or assault them, they attack our democratic values as well. They attack a father or mother, a son or daughter, a granpa or grandma. They attack a fellow citizen - a neighbour, colleague or classmate.

It is long overdue to extinguish antisemitism.

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The past moulded the present and the present shapes future, consequently we will first deal with the long history of antisemitism in Europe, from the 500s to the 1930s/40s. During this long period we take a very close look at the Nazi regime and the Holocaust (1933-1945), how each step was deliberately escalated by the National Socialists and the devastating result of their anti-Jewish policy.

The next section, Modern Antisemitism, shows two examples of the decade right after the Second World War and two examples of the late-2010s. An international survey about prejudices against Jews is included as well to get the full picture of the issue.

Lastly, an introduction to the Jewish/Hebrew calendar and the holidays.

## Antisemitism in Europe

Antisemitism has a long history in Europe. In the Middle Ages (500-1400), prejudices against Jews were primarily based in early Christian belief and thought - one myth being that the Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus.

### Antisemitism in Medieval Europe (500-1400)

#### Two Examples

##### England

The relations between Christians and Jews worsened under King Edward I who reigned from 1272 to 1307.

**In 1275**, the Statute of Jewry was implemented: It *"outlined that Jews had to live in specific areas of the king's towns; those aged over seven had to wear a badge that visually identified them as being Jewish; all aged over twelve years were to pay a tax of 3 pence each Easter; and Jews could only sell property or negotiate debts with the king's permission."* Furthermore, the Jewish population of England were neither allowed to be part of any guild (groups of craftsmen or merchants) nor to own farmland.

**On 17th November 1278**, all Jews of England were arrested "for clipping of money". Although Christians were accused of these crimes as well, it was clear that the Jewish community was targeted as the key suspects. On 7th May 1279, 269 Jews were executed.

**On 18th July 1290**, the Edict of Expulsion came into effect and the Jews were ordered to leave the realm until 1st November. It is estimated that 3,000 Jews were forced to leave.

**In 1656**, 366 years after the Edict of Expulsion, Oliver Cromwell (25 April 1599 – 3 September 1658) allowed Jews back into England. (source: [The National Archives UK](#))

##### France

Philippe le Bel (reign: 1285-1314) did the same thing in 1306 and expelled all Jews from France. Afterwards, he seized their property and confiscated the monies owed to them. *"Philip's devotion to St. Louis was witnessed that same year by elaborate ceremonies in his honour, and Louis's anti-Semitic proclivities might have inspired Philip to act against the*

*Jews, whose usefulness as a source of regular revenue had in any case been exhausted by his earlier repeated impositions."* ([Britannica, Persecution of the Jews and Knights Templar](#))  
In September 1307, he also seized all Knights Templars in France and exhorted his fellow rulers to do so as well.

Discrimination and suspicion continued in early modern Europe (1400-1800).

The Jewish population was isolated by the Christian majority in most aspects of economic, social and political life. This exclusion contributed to stereotypes of Jews as outsiders.

## Antisemitism in Early Modern Europe (1400-1800)

### Two Examples

#### Spain

On April 24, 1492 - 202 years after England's Edict of Expulsion - the Edict of the Expulsion of the Jews went public. No Jews were permitted to remain within the Kingdom of Spain, only those who converted to catholicism were "welcome to stay".

It didn't matter whether a Jew was poor or rich, either they had to convert or convert.

On December 16, 1968, the edict was formally and symbolically revoked following the Second Vatican Council (source: [NYTimes, 1492 Ban on Jews Is Voided by Spain](#))

#### Paragraph 4 of the Edict translated:

*"Therefore, we, with the counsel and advice of prelates, great noblemen of our kingdoms, and other persons of learning and wisdom of our Council, having taken deliberation about this matter, resolve to order the said Jews and Jewesses of our kingdoms to depart and never to return or come back to them or to any of them. And concerning this we command this our charter to be given, by which we order all Jews and Jewesses of whatever age they may be, who live, reside, and exist in our said kingdoms and lordships, as much those who are natives as those who are not, who by whatever manner or whatever cause have come to live and reside therein, that by the end of the month of July next of the present year, they depart from all of these our said realms and lordships, along with their sons and daughters, menservants and maidservants, Jewish familiars, those who are great as well as the lesser folk, of whatever age they may be, and they shall not dare to return to those places, nor to reside in them, nor to live in any part of them, neither temporarily on the way to somewhere else nor in any other manner, under pain that if they do not perform and comply with this command and should be found in our said kingdom and lordships and should in any manner live in them, they incur the penalty of death and the confiscation of all their possessions by our Chamber of Finance, incurring these penalties by the act itself, without further trial, sentence, or declaration. And we command and forbid that any person or persons of the said kingdoms, of whatever estate, condition, or dignity that they may be, shall dare to receive, protect, defend, nor hold publicly or secretly any Jew or Jewess beyond the date of the end of July and from henceforth forever, in their lands, houses, or in other parts of any of our said kingdoms and lordships, under pain of losing all their possessions, vassals, fortified places, and other inheritances, and beyond this of losing whatever financial grants they hold from us by our Chamber of Finance."* (source: [sephardic studies](#))

### Germany (i.e. the German Lands)

A unified Germany didn't exist until 1871, it was part of the [Holy Roman Empire](#) and a mosaic of various kingdoms. After the Thirty Years War, the Peace of Westphalia (1648) recognized the sovereignty of the empire's states; as a result the empire became more of a loose federation of states and the title of emperor given primarily honorific.

In the mid-18th century the situation worsened: *"Political power increasingly fell to small regional governments controlled by aristocratic overlords, ecclesiastical dignitaries, or municipal oligarchs. The history of Germany between the Thirty Years' War and the French Revolution is largely the sum total of the histories of dozens upon dozens of small political units, each enjoying virtually full rights of sovereignty."* ([Britannica, Germany from c. 1760 to 1815](#)) In other words: when an antisemitic law was passed in one state, the Jews moved to other states and either settle down there or move again when the same or a similar law followed up.

Until the end of the 18th century, Jews and Non-Jews were separated legally by a steep hill. After the medieval pogroms and expulsions, which periodically eradicated Jewish communities, economic and political regulations were a dominant feature in everyday life. With the exception of a few privileged "Schutzjuden" (Protected Jews), the majority of Jewish people lived excluded on the outskirts of society. They were viewed as foreigners, a marginalized group in a world which convinced itself that they could live without Jews and preferred to do exactly that. (source: ZeitGeschichte, Nr. 6/2021, p. 18).

With the growing secularization in Europe, many places lifted most legal restrictions on Jews. However, antisemitism didn't end there. Other types of antisemitism next to religious gained foothold in the 18th and 19th century. These new forms included economic, nationalist and racial antisemitism. The Nazi would later combine all of them, especially racial antisemitism, with pseudo-sciences (theories of race, eugenics and Social Darwinism). In this new wave of antisemitism, Jews were falsely accused of being responsible for social and political problems that arose in the modern, industrialized society.

### Pogroms of 1905 in Tsarist Russia

Instances where social and political antisemitism played a larger role can be found in Tsarist Russia<sup>1</sup>.

**Background:** In 1905 revolutionary demonstrations occurred in Russia, Czar Nicholas II was forced to make concessions and issued a manifesto on October 17 in which he promised a State Duma and granted the freedom of speech, the press, of associations and assembly. As a result, both rightist and leftist forces took to the streets

**Pogroms:** The reception by Jewish population of Russia to the manifesto was enthusiastic, in response Jewish pogroms were organized by the so-called [Black Hundred](#) (reactionary, anti-revolutionary, and antisemitic groups with the most important being League of the Russian

People (Soyuz Russkogo Naroda), League of the Archangel Michael (Soyuz Mikhaila Arkhangel'a), and Council of United Nobility (Soviet Obedinennogo Dvoryanstva). The Black Hundred conducted raids against revolutionary groups and pogroms against Jews - with unofficial approval of the government - from c. 1906 until c. 1914. The Kyiv Pogrom stands out due to its scale and destructive results.

*"The severest pogroms followed the proclamation of the October Manifesto, particularly in the first week of November 1905, when the non-Jewish intelligentsia was also attacked. In Ukraine major pogroms occurred in Kamianets-Podilskyi, Katerynoslav, Kyiv, Kremenchuk, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Romny, Chernihiv, Simferopol, and Yelysavethrad. Altogether about 700 pogroms were recorded. The scope of the attacks went beyond the wholesale destruction of property seen in 1881–2, to include rape and the killing of several hundred Jews. Again the most prominent participants were industrial and railway workers, small shopkeepers, and artisans. Peasants mostly joined in order to loot property. The second wave of pogroms intensified the desire of Jews to emigrate from the Russian Empire."*<sup>2</sup>

The official statistics only account for those victims who were hospitalized, and in the most importance provinces 876 deaths and 1,770 cases of injuries were registered.

A figure of 7,000-8,000 injuries is said to be more realistic. The material damage caused by looting and arson during the pogroms was estimated at 62 million rubles; in a number of cases the Jewish population of a single town suffered even greater losses<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bsb-muenchen.de/mikro/lit511.pdf> (PDF, 13 pages)

<sup>2</sup>

<http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CP%5CO%5CPogrom.htm>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/fakultaeten/philosophie/zegk/sog/loewe\\_artikel\\_pogrome.html#\\_edn217](https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/fakultaeten/philosophie/zegk/sog/loewe_artikel_pogrome.html#_edn217)

The National Socialists built on the antisemitism that has been around for centuries by then and radicalized it even further with their racial ideology. From the beginning this race-based worldview was at the core of the NSDAP (founded on 5 January 1919 in Munich as Deutsche Arbeiterpartei = German Workers Party and renamed to Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei = National Socialist German Worker Party on 24 February 1920).

The Nazis believed that the world was divided into distinct races where some were superior to the other. Germans were in this hierarchy members of the supposedly superior "Aryan" race who were locked in a struggle for existence with other, inferior races.

Moreover, they believed that the Jews were a race of their own and the most inferior and dangerous. Accordingly, they had to be removed from German society.

*"Otherwise, the Nazis insisted, the "Jewish race" would permanently corrupt and destroy the German people. The Nazis' race-based definition of Jews included many persons who identified as Christians or did not practice Judaism."* (source: [U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum](https://www.ushmm.org/))

In 1933, the Jewish population in Europe numbered 9 million people.

In Germany, there lived 600,000 Jews at the time - most of whom who were proud of being German and the contributions their country made to poetry, literature, music and art.

During the First World War, more than 100,000 German Jews served in the German military and many were decorated for bravery. They were present in important government

positions and taught at universities. *"Of the 38 Nobel Prizes won by German writers and scientists between 1905 and 1936, 14 went to Jews. Marriage between Jews and non-Jews was becoming more common. Although German Jews continued to encounter some discrimination in their social lives and professional careers, many were confident of their future as Germans. They spoke the German language and regarded Germany as their home."*

(source: [ushmm](https://ushmm.org))

## The Holocaust

On 24 February 1920, when the DAP was renamed to the NSDAP, Adolf Hitler proclaimed the program of the National Socialists at the first large Party gathering in Munich.

There were 25 points overall, here are those which already made their goals clear in regard to removing the German Jews from society:

*"[...] 4. Only a member of the race can be a citizen. A member of the race can only be one who is of German blood, without consideration of creed. Consequently no Jew can be a member of the race."*

Here we already see radical antisemitism mixing with the racial ideology of the Nazis: Jews were viewed as an entirely different race and thus undeserving of citizenship. Later, in the third Reich, they'd become second-class citizens - the first step into the genocide.

The **Reichsbürgergesetz** (Reich Citizenship Law) was passed on September 15, 1935.

Jews were from then on only **Reichsangehörige** (Members of the Reich).

*"[...] 6. The right to determine matters concerning administration and law belongs only to the citizen. Therefore we demand that every public office, of any sort whatsoever, whether in the Reich, the county or municipality, be filled only by citizens. [...]"*

In the context of point 4, this would bar all German Jews from holding any public office.

On April 7, 1933 the National Socialists passed a law called **Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums** (Civil Service Restoration Act) which did exactly that.

Paul von Hindenburg was still Reichspräsident during that time, but he only intervened to protect those who became bureaucritized since August 1, 1914 or earlier (known as Frontkämpferprivileg = Front-line soldier privilege, applied to those who served at the front during the First World War).



*"[...] 23. [...] In order to enable the provision of a German press, we demand, that a: **All writers and employees of the newspapers appearing in the German language be members of the race***

*b: Non-German newspapers be required to have the express permission of the State to be published. They may not be printed in the German language c: Non-Germans are forbidden by law any financial interest in German publications or any influence on them and as punishment for violations the closing of such a publication as well as the immediate expulsion from the Reich of the non-German concerned."*

When a publication was deemed to be "counter the general good", it was to be forbidden. Artists and literary forms which "exert a destructive influence on our national life" were demanded to be legally prosecuted. Organizations that opposed any of the demands were threatened - and after the fascist takeover forced - to closure.

a) shows once again the racial ideology of the Nazis and their intention to forcefully remove the Jewish people from society on a political, economic and social level.

The entire program, translated into English, can be read on the website of the Virginia Holocaust Museum: <https://www.vaholocaust.org/25-points-of-nsdap/>

## **The other victims of Nazi persecution and mass murder**

While Jews were viewed as the priority enemy, the National Socialists also targeted other groups. Before the war, and shortly after coming into power on January 30, 1933, they persecuted their political opponents - it ranged from officials and members of the party to trade union activists. However, mere suspicion of criticizing or opposing the Nazi Party was sufficient enough to become a target as well. They were the first group to be arrested and put into concentration camps.

For refusing to swear loyalty to the German government or serve in the German military, the Jehovah's Witnesses were incarcerated in prisons and concentration camps as well.

Activities deemed harmful by the Nazi regime were also targeted. This group included men accused of homosexuality, persons accused of being professional or habitual criminals, and so-called asocials (such as people identified as vagabonds, beggars, prostitutes, pimps, and alcoholics). They were, too, incarcerated in prisons or concentration camps. Afro-Germans were also forcibly sterilized and persecuted.

Germans with disabilities were considered to be a burden on the "Volksgemeinschaft" and alleged to have unhealthy hereditary conditions. As a result, they were sterilized.

Nazi policy towards this group radicalized when the war began and, since they were considered a genetic and financial burden on Germany, those living in institutions were targeted for murder in the so-called Euthanasia Program.

Lastly, actions against groups that were viewed as racial, civilizational, or ideological enemies were more extreme. Part of this group was Sinti and Roma, Poles (especially the Polish intelligentsia and elites), Soviet officials and Soviet prisoners of war. The Nazis committed mass murder against these groups (see [Commissar Order](#)).



## 1933-1939

As we have seen in the elaborations above, the Nazis began excluding Jews from German economic, political, social and cultural life almost immediately.

Here I include two examples of the increasingly escalating antisemitic campaigns in the pre-war years (January 30, 1933 - August 31, 1939).

### April 1, 1933

The first nationwide action is carried out against the Jews.

Jewish businesses and professionals were targeted, the Nazi government claimed that it was in response to "*Greuelpropaganda*" (atrocity stories) that circulated in the international press due to the German and foreign Jews, assisted by foreign journalists.



**Illustration 2 - Boycott of Jewish-owned Businesses (April 1, 1933, Berlin)**  
Members of the SA (Storm Troopers) block the entrance to a Jewish owned business.  
The sign translates to "Germans! Defend yourself! Don't buy from Jews!"

In this first nationwide planned action, members of the Sturmabteilung (SA)/Storm Troopers blocked the entrance to businesses owned by Jews such as department stores and retail establishments, as well as that of professionals like Doctors and Lawyers.

Acts of violence against Jews and Jewish property occurred throughout Germany, but the police only rarely intervened.

It lasted only for one day and many individual Germans ignored it, they continued to shop in Jewish-owned stores. However, this marked the beginning of a nationwide campaign against the Jewish population.

(source: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/boycott-of-jewish-businesses>)

### **November 9-10, 1938**

At this point in time, the German Jews already had to suffer through a lot.

The discrimination drastically increased, their rights were taken away and restrictions on them were ever-increasing. In addition, mental arsonists like Julius Streicher waged an unhinged hate campaign against the Jews with his weekly paper "Der Stürmer".

The pogrom that occurred in the night from the 9th to the 10th November is known as the "Reichskristallnacht". It had been planned and implemented by the highest echelons of the Nazi leadership. The signal was given by Joseph Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda, and the plan was carried out by members of the Nazi regime.

*"During the pogrom 91 Jews were murdered, more than 1,400 synagogues across Germany and Austria were torched, and Jewish-owned shops and businesses were plundered and destroyed. In addition, the Jews were forced to pay "compensation" for the damage that had been caused and approximately 30,000 Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps."* ([Yad Vashem](#))



Illustration 3 - Flames pouring out of a synagogue in Siegen, Germany, during Kristallnacht

Prior to this pogrom, the first mass deportation of Jews took place.

On October 27, 1938, a brutal eviction of Jews with Polish citizenship was carried out. Children, elderly and the sick were driven across the Polish border by SS men; once they arrived there, the majority of them were concentrated in abandoned staples near the border town of [Zbaszyń](#), Poland. This deportation is directly connected to the pogrom.

**On October 27, 1938** the Germans began arresting Jews with Polish citizenship who had been living in Germany, with the intention of kicking them out of the country. Their pretext was a decree made by the Polish Ministry of the Interior earlier that month, which declared that Polish citizens living abroad needed to get their passports checked and re-stamped. Those who had not done so by October 29 would no longer be allowed to return to Poland. Germany used this as an excuse to deport thousands of Jews who had been living on German soil.

Before the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question began", about 300,000 German Jews were able to emigrate. An important role in encouraging emigration played international Jewish organization, national associations of German Jews and the Zionist movement.

(source: <https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/about/nazi-germany-1933-39/1938.html>)

## 1939-1941

On September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany [invaded Poland](#) which brought loose the Second World War in Europe. The United Kingdom and France would declare war on Germany two days later, and on September 17, 1939 the Soviet Union invaded Poland from the East. Before the invasion of Poland, there existed a Non-Aggression Pact with Poland which was signed in January 1934. While it was unpopular with the German public due to Poland receiving the former German provinces of West Prussia, Poznan (Poznań), and Upper Silesia after the First World War, Hitler sought the non-aggression pact to prevent a French-Polish military alliance from forming against Germany. On April 28, 1939, Hitler announced the withdrawal from the pact that was signed with Poland just over five years earlier.

On August 23, 1939, the German-Soviet Pact (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) came into effect. The agreement also included a secret protocol which defined the territorial spheres of influence Germany and Russia would have after a successful invasion of Poland.

## Text of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact (source: [Jewish Virtual Library](#))

The Government of the German Reich and The Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics desirous of strengthening the cause of peace between Germany and the U.S.S.R., and proceeding from the fundamental provisions of the Neutrality Agreement concluded in April, 1926 between Germany and the U.S.S.R., have reached the following Agreement:

**Article I.** Both High Contracting Parties obligate themselves to desist from any act of violence, any aggressive action, and any attack on each other, either individually or jointly with other Powers.

**Article II.** Should one of the High Contracting Parties become the object of belligerent action by a third Power, the other High Contracting Party shall in no manner lend its support to this third Power.

**Article III.** The Governments of the two High Contracting Parties shall in the future maintain continual contact with one another for the purpose of consultation in order to exchange information on problems affecting their common interests.

**Article IV.** Should disputes or conflicts arise between the High Contracting Parties shall participate in any grouping of Powers whatsoever that is directly or indirectly aimed at the other party.

**Article V.** Should disputes or conflicts arise between the High Contracting Parties over problems of one kind or another, both parties shall settle these disputes or conflicts exclusively through friendly exchange of opinion or, if necessary, through the establishment of arbitration commissions.

**Article VI.** The present Treaty is concluded for a period of ten years, with the proviso that, in so far as one of the High Contracting Parties does not advance it one year prior to the expiration of this period, the validity of this Treaty shall automatically be extended for another five years.

**Article VII.** The present treaty shall be ratified within the shortest possible time. The ratifications shall be exchanged in Berlin. The Agreement shall enter into force as soon as it is signed.

**[The section below which contained the secret protocol was not published.]**

Secret Additional Protocol.

**Article I.** In the event of a territorial and political rearrangement in the areas belonging to the Baltic States (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the northern boundary of Lithuania shall represent the boundary of the spheres of influence of Germany and U.S.S.R. In this connection the interest of Lithuania in the Vilna area is recognized by each party.

**Article II.** In the event of a territorial and political rearrangement of the areas belonging to the Polish state, the spheres of influence of Germany and the U.S.S.R. shall be bounded approximately by the line of the rivers Narev, Vistula and San.

The question of whether the interests of both parties make desirable the maintenance of an independent Polish States and how such a state should be bounded can only be definitely determined in the course of further political developments.

In any event both Governments will resolve this question by means of a friendly agreement.

**Article III.** With regard to Southeastern Europe attention is called by the Soviet side to its interest in Bessarabia. The German side declares its complete political disinterestedness in these areas.

**Article IV.** This protocol shall be treated by both parties as strictly secret.

Moscow, August 23, 1939.

For the Government of the German Reich v. Ribbentrop

Plenipotentiary of the Government of the U.S.S.R. V. Molotov



Illustration 4 - The German-Soviet Partition of Poland  
(source: [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](https://www.ushmm.org))



After the Wehrmacht defeated Poland and the last units surrendered on October 6, 1939, Nazi Germany [launched a campaign of terror](#) to destroy the Polish nation and culture. The National Socialists considered the Polish to be racially inferior whose only purpose should be to become a leaderless population of peasants and workers laboring for Germans. In the weeks after Germany's attack, thousands of Polish civilians were shot by German SS (Schutzstaffel), police and military units.

In the Spring of 1940, the German occupation authorities launched AB-Aktion, a plan to systemically eliminate Poles considered to be part of the "leadership class" (i.e. Poles that were seen as being the most capable of organizing resistance to German rule).

Thousands of teachers, priests, and other intellectuals were shot in the mass killings.

By the end of the war, it is estimated that between 1.8 and 1.9 million non-Jewish Polish civilians were killed by the Germans. In addition to the 3 million Jewish citizens that were murdered by the Germans (4.8-4.9 million non-combatant deaths).

In late-Spring, [Germany's invasion of its western neighbours](#) began.

Germany attacked on May 10, 1940 - first targeting the Low Countries (the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg), then invading France through the Ardennes Forest in southeastern Belgium and northern Luxembourg. Paris, the capital of France, fell to the Germans on June 14, 1940. The armistice was signed on June 22, 1940.



Illustration 5 - The campaign in the west lasted one month and 12 days (May 10, 1940 - June 22, 1940)  
(source: [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#))

Northern France was occupied by Germany and in the southern part of France a new government under Marshall Henri Petain was established - known as the Vichy government. Germany's plan to defeat the British Royal Air Force (RAF) in order to win air superiority failed in 1940, as a consequence Hitler delayed the invasion until Spring 1941. However, with the first operation order for the German invasion of the Soviet Union given in December 1940, the invasion plans for Great Britain was postponed indefinitely.

Once a refuge from Nazism, the Low Countries and France were now under the control of the National Socialists. Many of whom who would later be murdered in death camps like Auschwitz-Birkenau. France's [total deaths](#) amount to 600,000; the Netherlands to 210,000; Belgium to 88,000, and Luxembourg to 7,106 (in total 905,106 casualties).

## 1941-1945

On June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany launched a surprise attack against the Soviet Union. With it began the War of Extermination and the long-term goal of Hitler and the Nazi Party to conquer "Lebensraum" (living space) in the East. It was called "[Operation Barbarossa](#)".

*"From the beginning of operational planning, German military and police authorities intended to wage a [war of annihilation](#) against both the Soviet Union's "Judeo-Bolshevik" Communist government and its citizens, particularly the Jews."*

Long before the Nazis came into power, their core policies included the destruction of the Soviet Union by military force; the permanent elimination of communism (which was perceived as a threat to Germany); and the conquest and colonisation of land within Soviet borders for "Lebensraum" (living space) for long-term settlement.

In fact, colonization was part of the 25 Points of the NSDAP when it was released on February 24, 1920, albeit they didn't elaborate on the point:

**"3. We demand land and territory (colonies) for the sustenance of our people, and colonization for our surplus population."** (source: Virginia Holocaust Museum)

The non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union was therefore always regarded as a temporary tactical maneuver - as they did with Poland. In the months following up the invasion, officials of the Army High Command (Oberkommando des Heeres-OKH) and the Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt-RSHA) negotiated arrangements for the deployment of Einsatzgruppen behind the frontlines (see table 1).



Table 1

## Einsatzgruppen (Task Forces)

(source: [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#))

The Einsatzgruppen were units of the Security Police and SD (Sicherheitsdienst = Security Service, the intelligence service of the SS).

Their tasks included to identify and neutralize potential enemies, seizing important sites *"and preventing sabotage, and recruiting collaborators and establishing intelligence networks"*. Since September 1939, they also killed civilians that were perceived as enemies. In Poland they participated in the murder of Jews and the Polish elites.

For the invasion of the Soviet Union, Germany assembled 210 divisions at full fighting strength, 73 of whom were meant for deployment behind the lines.

For the initial invasion plan - which goal it was to defeat the USSR in Autumn 1941 - three million German soldiers had been deployed, 650,000 soldiers came from Germany's allies Finland and Romania. Italy, Croatia, Slovakia and Hungary sent soldiers as well.

The front stretched from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south, to put in numbers: 1,900 miles (3,057.75 km). In order to deal with such a vast territory, the Germans divided responsibilities among what they called Army Groups North, Centre and South. As in the wars they fought before, the formations relied on speed and firepower to execute the Blitzkrieg (lightning war).

## The Nazi War Atlas of Operation Barbarossa

(source: <https://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2019/12/the-nazi-war-atlas-of-operation-barbarossa/>)

This war atlas, which is possibly the only one existing, covers the campaign from the beginning of the invasion to December 6, 1941.

"The oversized book chronicling Operation Barbarossa (the invasion's code name) resides in the Library's [Geography and Map Division](#). It is without peer and may be the only one ever made. How this historical gem came to reside here is lost to history. Map librarians speculate that American troops captured the atlas in 1945, during the fall of Germany, and brought it stateside along with a large volume of German military documents."

With the advancement of the Wehrmacht, the SS and police units got deeper into Soviet territory as well. The first one to arrive were the Einsatzgruppen, tasked by the RSHA with:

- identifying and eliminating people who might organize and carry out resistance to the German occupation forces;
- identifying and concentrating groups of people who were considered potential threats to German rule in the East;
- establishing intelligence networks;
- and securing key documentation and facilities.

## Holocaust by Bullet

Before the gas chambers were used for the genocide, the SS, police and Wehrmacht units executed Jews with guns. First they rounded them up, then they murdered them.

The mobile Nazi killing units first murdered all adult male Jews, then from Summer to Fall they began to target women, children and entire Jewish communities:

*"On July 21, 1941, Reinhard Heydrich, the chief of the Security Police (or Sipo, which included the Gestapo) and Security Service (Sicherheitsdienst) began to encourage his commandos to kill all military and civilian Jewish prisoners, not just those who belonged to the Soviet Communist Party or held government positions."* (National WWII Museum, Jennifer Popowycz, PhD)

In [Babi Yar](#), 33,371 Ukrainian Jews were murdered within 36 hours - from September 29, 1941 to September 30, 1941: *"The [postwar trial records](#) give a sense of what occurred. The victims "were made to lie facedown on the bloodied corpses of victims who had already been shot. If they did not do this willingly, they were beaten and knocked down. Then the gunners climbed over the wobbly mounds toward the victims and shot them in the back of the neck."* According to an [operational situation report](#) the Germans sent back to Berlin, they shot a total of 33,371 Jews." Until November 1943, when the Red Army liberated the city, the Nazi killing machine murdered another 70,000 individuals. The victims included Romani people, psychiatric patients, prisoners of war and other civilians.

In the [first phase of the genocide](#) more than 1.5 million Jews were murdered by the Germans, their allies, and local collaborators in Ukraine, Belarus, and other USSR republics. *"It was during this initial phase that special German killing squads (Einsatzkommandos) coordinated the mass murder of Jews by bullets with the help of the SS, Wehrmacht troops, the Romanian military, special "operational squadrons," order police units, and local collaborators."*

(see illustration 6 on the next page for the Einsatzgruppen massacres)



Illustration 6 - 495 sites were identified by the Jewish Preservation Committee of Ukraine, however, a more recent by the Catholic-Jewish Organization (Yahad-In Unum) put the total number of sites to 916 (source: national ww2 museum) (source: [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](https://www.ushmm.org/))

### The Wannsee Conference and Gas Chambers

On January 20, 1942, Nazi officials held a meeting in the Berlin suburbs of Wannsee to plan the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question" (Endlösung zur Judenfrage). This came six months after Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, head of the Luftwaffe, issued orders to Reinhard Heydrich, SS leader and Gestapo chief, to prepare a comprehensive plan for this "final solution". [This conference](#) was attended by 15 Nazi senior bureaucrats led by Heydrich and including Adolf Eichmann, chief of Jewish affairs for the Reich Central Security Office.

The following Nazi officials [attended](#) the conference:

- SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich (1904-1942)  
SS-leader, Gestapo chief, Chief of the RSHA, Deputy Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia
- SS-Gruppenführer Otto Hofmann (1896-1982)  
Head of the Race and Settlement Main Office (RuSHA)
- SS-Gruppenführer Heinrich Müller (1900-1945)  
Chief of Amt IV (Gestapo)

- SS-Oberführer Dr. Karl Eberhard Schöngarth (1903-1946)  
Commander of the SiPo and the SD in the General Government
- SS-Oberführer Dr. Gerhard Klopfer (1905-1987)  
Permanent Secretary (Nazi Party Chancellery)
- SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962)  
Head of Referat IV B4 of the Gestapo Recording secretary
- SS-Sturmbannführer Dr. Rudolf Lange (1910-1945)  
Commander of the SiPo and the SD for Latvia;  
Deputy Commander of the SiPo and the SD for the RKO,  
Head of Einsatzkommando 2
- Dr. Georg Leibbrandt (1899-1982)  
Reichsamtleiter (Reich Head Office)
- Dr. Alfred Meyer (1891-1945)  
Gauleiter (Regional Party Leader)  
State Secretary and Deputy Reich Minister
- Dr. Josef Bühler (1904-1948)  
State Secretary (General Government)
- Dr. Roland Freisler (1893-1945)  
State Secretary (Reich Ministry of Justice)
- SS-Brigadeführer Dr. Wilhelm Stuckart (1902-1953)  
State Secretary (Reich Interior Ministry)
- SS-Oberführer Erich Neumann (1892-1951)  
State Secretary (Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Four Year Plan)
- Friedrich Wilhelm Kritzinger (1890-1947)  
Permanent Secretary (Reich Chancery)
- Martin Luther (1895-1945)  
Under-Secretary (Reich Foreign Ministry)

All of them were well-informed about the policy towards Jews and understood the part they had to play for this unprecedented policy to succeed. The final protocol of the Wannsee Conference never explicitly mentioned extermination, but, within a few months after the meeting, the Nazis installed the first poison-gas chambers in Poland in what is now known as Vernichtungslager (Extermination Camps). Reinhard Heydrich was responsible for the entire project, as well as his SS and Gestapo.

Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945), Reichsführer-SS from 6 January, 1929 to 29 April, 1945, played a central role in the Holocaust. He was the head of the SS. When Heydrich died as a

result of the injuries sustained during the assassination attempt, he took over his responsibility for the project.

The protocol wasn't written word-for-word, Eichmann revised the stenograph's notes and changed the text to reflect a more "official language". Peter Longerich, a prominent Holocaust scholar, has argued that the protocol should be read as guidelines approved by Reinhard Heydrich and the RSHA.

You can read the translated version of the protocol on the website of Yad Vashem:  
<https://www.yadvashem.org/docs/wannsee-conference-protocol.html>

## The Death Camps

**Name:** Chelmno

**Operated:** December 8, 1941 - January 1945

The first extermination camp established by the Nazis on Polish soil.

Primary victims of the death camp were Jews of the Lodz ghetto and vicinity.

In Chelmno gas vans were used to murder the victims while transporting them to a burial place in a nearby forest. *"When the deportees reached the camp, they were ordered to undress, stripped of their belongings, and tricked into boarding a van whose exhaust pipe was actually connected to its interior."* There were no survivors.

**Deaths:** 300,000 Jews and 5,000 Sinti and Roma

In March 1942, after the guidelines for the planned mass murder were worked out at the Wannsee Conference, the Germans established three extermination camps at the eastern boundary of the General Government.

**Names:** Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka

**Operated:**

Belzec: March 1942 - December 1942, cremation of bodies in Spring 1943 in an attempt to cover up the traces of the murders that were committed

Sobibor: May-July 1942 and October 1942 - October 1943

Treblinka: July 1942 - August 1943

The sole purpose of these camps was to carry out the systematic murder of European Jewry as part of the Final Solution. There, the permanent gas chambers were built.

In the death camps no selections were performed, once the deportation trains arrived the victims - men, women and children - were sent directly to the gas chambers. The standard execution method was to release carbon monoxide from large tanks into the sealed chambers. However, before the victims were forced to enter these chambers, they were stripped of their clothing and then crowded in the chambers. Within a short time, they died of suffocation. Jewish slave laborers had to remove the corpses and throw them in a large pit, later they were burned in an attempt to hide the evidence. This whole process only took a few hours, as a result several transports were murdered in a day.

**Deaths:** 1,700,000 Jews (mostly from Poland)

**Name:** Majdnek

**Operated:** Late-1941 - July 1944

It was initially built for Soviet prisoners and as a concentration camp for Poles.

The gas chambers and crematoria were built in 1942. In the Spring of the same year thousands of Jews, Slovaks, Czechs, Germans, and Poles were murdered in Majdanek.

The Soviet Army liberated the camp in July 1944.

**Deaths:** approx. 78,000 people

**Name:** Auschwitz-Birkenau

**Operated:** May 1940 - January 1945

Established in the suburbs of Oswiecim, a Polish city annexed to the Third Reich, the city was renamed to Auschwitz - the concentration camp was given the same name.

It was initially built, because the "local" prisons were overcrowded due to the mass arrest of Poles. On June 14, 1940, the first prisoner transport arrived in Auschwitz.

At first, Auschwitz served as a concentration camp like other of its type that were set up in the early 30s; beginning in 1942, it became one of the largest extermination camps too.

**It consisted of two parts:** Auschwitz, the oldest complex which was built on the grounds and buildings of prewar Polish barracks, later called "Auschwitz I". And Birkenau, which construction began in 1941 on the site of the village of Brzezinka, three kilometers away from Oswiecim, known as "Auschwitz II". Polish civilians who lived there had their property confiscated and demolished. In Birkenau resided most of the extermination apparatus and it also was the place where the majority of victims were murdered.

**Prisoners:** In Auschwitz I, the number of imprisoned people fluctuated around 15,000 - sometimes reaching 20,000; in Auschwitz II, over 90,000 prisoners were held in 1944.

**Slave Labour:** Over 40 sub-camps were founded for the purpose of exploiting the imprisoned people. They largely had to work in German industrial plants and on farms.

*"The largest of them was called Buna (Monowitz, with ten thousand prisoners) and was opened by the camp administration in 1942 on the grounds of the Buna-Werke synthetic rubber and fuel plant six kilometers from the Auschwitz camp. On November 1943, the Buna sub-camp became the seat of the commandant of the third part of the camp, Auschwitz III, to which some other Auschwitz sub-camps were subordinated."* ([Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau](#))

**Deaths:** 1,100,000 Jews; 70,000 to 75,000 Poles; 21,000 Roma and 15,000 Soviet POW.

(illustration 7 shows the Auschwitz complex)



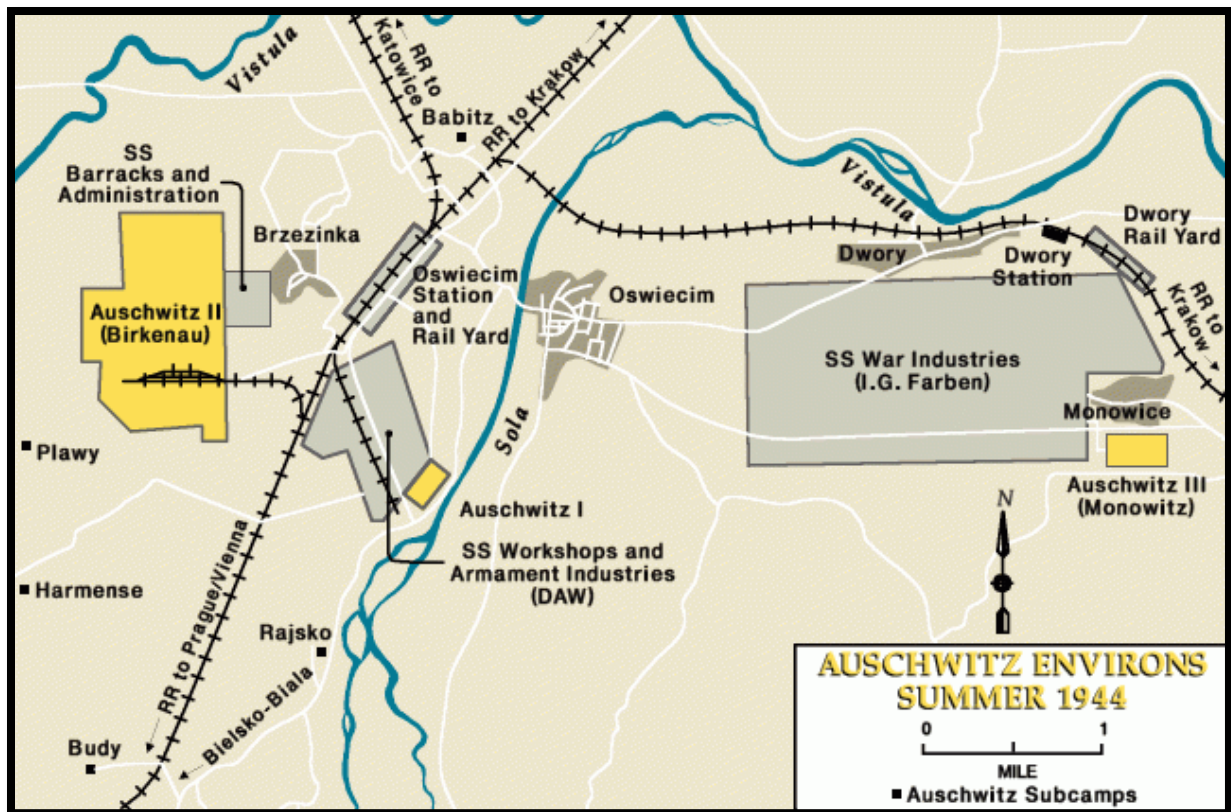


Illustration 7 - Auschwitz Environs, Summer 1944  
(source: [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Animated Map](#))

## Death Marches

As the Second World War neared its end and the German military was on the verge of defeat in 1945, the Germans began to move those prisoners out who could still walk in order to use them as forced laborers in camps inside Germany. Before, during or after marches large groups of prisoners were killed by the Nazis.

The prisoners had to march long distances with little or no food, water and rest. Those who can't keep up or continue were shot: *"During one march, 7,000 Jewish prisoners, 6,000 of them women, were moved from camps in the Danzig region bordered on the north by the Baltic Sea. On the ten-day march, 700 were murdered."* ([US Holocaust Memorial Museum](#)) It wasn't over for those who arrived at the destination, once there they were executed.

**On January 18, 1945,** the death marches from Auschwitz began.

Thousands of prisoners were shot before the march and 60,000 were forced to march to the city of Wodzislaw, most of them Jews. 15,000 died during the march.

9 days later, the Soviet army entered Auschwitz and liberated the few remaining prisoners.

**On January 25, 1945,** the death march from Stutthof began.

50,000 prisoners, most of whom were Jews, were forced to leave the camp.

5,000 of them were from subcamps and marched to the Baltic Sea coast where they were forced into the water and executed by machine guns. Over 25,000 died during the march.

On May 9, 1945, Soviet forces enter Stutthof.



**On April 7, 1945,** the death march from Buchenwald began.

The Nazis began a mass evacuation as American forces were approaching.

In Buchenwald, 30,000 prisoners were forced on the death march.

About 10,000 prisoners died during the march.

Four days later, the remaining prisoners take control of the camp before the Americans arrived on the same day.

**April 26, 1945,** the death march from KZ Dachau begins.

About 7,000 prisoners were forced to leave to march to Tegernsee.

The march took 6 days, those who cannot keep up or continue were shot; many others died of exposure, hunger or exhaustion.

Just three days later, the Americans liberate KZ Dachau and in early May 1945, American troops liberate those who survived the march to Tegernsee.



Illustration 8 - Major death marches from Auschwitz, January 1945  
(same source as the last map)

## End of the Second World War in Europe

With the end of the Second World War in Europe (in the Pacific it still continued against the Japanese Empire) the genocide against the Jews, the Slavic people and mass murder of other groups deemed inferior by the National Socialists ended.

Adolf Hitler chose suicide on April 30, 1945 and died in the Führerbunker in Berlin.

Millions of lives were lost in a genocidal war waged by the Nazi machinery, a totalitarian regime supported by most Germans which turned much of Europe into ash and rubble.

The primary target was Jews, but the Slavic people were also a major target of the War of Annihilation. Here the number of deaths as it is known up to this date (Dec. 8, 2020):

Number of Deaths 🔑	
Group	Number of Deaths
Jews	6 million
Soviet civilians	around 7 million (including 1.3 Soviet Jewish civilians, who are included in the 6 million figure for Jews)
Soviet prisoners of war	around 3 million (including about 50,000 Jewish soldiers)
Non-Jewish Polish civilians	around 1.8 million (including between 50,000 and 100,000 members of the Polish elites)
Serb civilians (on the territory of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina)	312,000
People with disabilities living in institutions	up to 250,000
Roma (Gypsies)	between 250,000 and 500,000
Jehovah's Witnesses	around 1,900
Repeat criminal offenders and so-called asocials	at least 70,000
German political opponents and resistance activists in Axis-occupied territory	undetermined
Homosexuals	hundreds, possibly thousands (possibly also counted in part under the 70,000 repeat criminal offenders and so-called asocials noted above)

Table 2 - Source: Documenting Numbers of Victims of the Holocaust and Nazi Persecution, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

*"To accurately estimate the extent of human losses, scholars, Jewish organizations, and governmental agencies since the 1940s have relied on a variety of different records, such as census reports, captured German and Axis archives, and postwar investigations, to compile these statistics. As more documents come to light or as scholars arrive at a more precise*

*understanding of the Holocaust, estimates of human losses may change.*

*The single most important thing to keep in mind when attempting to document numbers of victims of the Holocaust is that no one master list of those who perished exists anywhere in the world." ([uhmm](#))*

The scale of the genocide and persecution becomes clear when one looks at the numbers. It is also important to remember that behind each number are individuals whose hopes and dreams were destroyed. Their killers sought to destroy their dignity and individuality, hence the efforts to name the victims are so important.

Each victim had a family, friends and a community - those who survived lost either all of it or the majority. For comparison: the second and fourth largest city in the US (Los Angeles, CA and Houston, TX) combined have a [population of 6,463,160](#).



This photo shows Dawid Samoszul, it was probably taken in Piotrkow Trybunalski, Poland, between 1936 and 1938. He was one of the victims who was murdered in Treblinka. He only reached the age of 9 ([ushmm](#)).

### Jewish Combatants in the Second World War

During the Second World War, hundreds of thousands of Jews fought on the side of the allies and partisans and resistance fighters. Overall, 1,515,300 Jews fought against Nazi Germany and its allies. As the tide of the war turned against the Nazis, and the occupied territories were liberated by allied forces from 1944 onwards, there were not many Jews left who enlisted in the military with others due to the genocide.

Those who served could be found in all troop units and hold all ranks, from the sniper to the general. When they were captured, they were usually executed by the Wehrmacht. In the Red Army, between 35% to 40% of the 200,000 Jewish soldiers killed in action were immediately executed upon capture (= 70,000 to 80,000).

Land	Jewish Soldiers	Share of Soldiers in the Jewish population	Share of Jews in the total Number of soldiers	Part of the Population That is Jewish
USA	550,000	10.0 %	4.5 %	4.2 %
Soviet Union	500,000	16.6 %	1.5 %	1.5 %
Poland	180,000	5.8 %	11.0 %	8.9%
Great Britain	62,000	14.3 %	0.7 %	0.9 %
Mandatory Palestine	40,000	8.9 %	Irrelevant	Irrelevant
France	35,000	14.6 %	0.7 %	0.6 %
Canada	16,900	7.0 %	2.2 %	2.1 %
Greece	12,900	17.7 %	3.0 %	1.0 %
South Africa	10,000	9.7 %	3.0 %	0.9 %
Czechoslovakia	5,500	1.5 %	1.2 %	2.3 %
Australia	3,900	11.0 %	0.4 %	0.5 %
Netherlands	3,000	1.9 %	1.1 %	1.8 %
Yugoslavia*	2,500	3.6 %	0.5 %	0.4 %
Belgium	600	10.0 %**	No data available	No data available
Partisans and Resistance fighters	93,000	No data available	No data available	No data available

\*Regarding Yugoslavia, the amount of Jews in partisan groups were particularly high  
 \*\*10.0 % of Jewish citizens.

Source: Museum for Jewish soldiers of the Second World War

The Badge of the Jewish Brigade




Table 3 - (source: An Allen Fronten - Jüdische Soldaten im Zweiten Weltkrieg, p. 21)

**The Chaim Herzog Museum of the Jewish Soldier in World War II**  
 (source: [https://www.jwmww2.org/About\\_The\\_Museum](https://www.jwmww2.org/About_The_Museum))

The book "An allen Fronten - Jüdische Soldaten im Zweiten Weltkrieg" also included a link to this website which tells the story about Jewish soldiers during the Second World War too: *"The Association for the Establishment of the Museum of the Jewish Soldier in World War II, is building the Museum of the Jewish Soldier in World War II, in order to tell the*

*important and neglected chapter in the history of Jewish people, the story of the heroism alongside the Holocaust. It will also show the contribution of Jewish soldiers to the defeat of the Nazi regime and its threat to the very existence of the Jewish people. The museum will be named after the late Haim Herzog, the sixth president of the State of Israel."*

## Modern Antisemitism

The unprecedented scale and horror of the Nazi policy should have discredited antisemitism for eternity, unfortunately that wasn't the case as this lethal irrationality would continue to hunt the world.

**On July 1, 1946**, just one year after the end of the Second World War, a pogrom occurred in Poland in the city of Kielce. By the end of the day, 42 Jews were killed, 40 others injured and two non-Jewish Poles died as well. While nine of the attacks were executed on July 14, 1946, after a hasty judicial investigation, the [Kielce pogrom](#) sparked intense fears in the already-traumatized postwar Polish Jewish community.

**On January 13, 1953**, nine doctors - six of whom were Jewish - were charged with poisoning Andrey A. Zhadnov (Central Committee secretary) who had died in 1948, and Alexander S. Shcherbakov who had died in 1945 (Main Political Administration of the Soviet army). They were accused of working for the US and British intelligence services, attempting to murder several marshals of the Soviet army and "*serving the interests of international Jewry*". Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, intervened the process and in April Pravda announced a reexamination of the case where it was shown that the charges were false and obtained by torture. Two died during the torture, the rest were exonerated. This last episode of Stalin's reign is known as the [Doctor's Plot](#).

Fast forward, here are two recent examples of antisemitic attacks on Jewish communities.

**On October 27, 2018**, Robert Bowser entered the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA and yelled "All Jews must die". He opened fire on the attendees and killed 11 people. The names of the murdered individuals: Irving Younger, Melvin Wax, Rose Mallinger, Bernice Simon, Sylvan Simon, Jerry Rabinowitz, Joyce Fienberg, Richard Gottfried, Daniel Stein, Cecil Rosenthal and David Rosenthal. [Their stories](#) were released by CNN. It was the [deadliest attack](#) ever on the Jewish community in the U.S.

*"It is important to understand this incident in the context of antisemitism in the U.S. In its annual [2017 Audit of Antisemitic Incidents](#), ADL found that the number of reported antisemitic incidents in the U.S. rose 57% in 2017, the largest single-year increase on record*



*and the second highest number reported since ADL started tracking such data in 1979. There was a total of 1,986 incidents, which fall into three major categories: harassment, vandalism and assault."*

**On October 09, 2019**, the synagogue in Halle, Germany, was attacked on Yom Kippur - the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. The terrorist tried to enter the synagogue where approximately 80 congregants were worshipping. He failed to enter the synagogue and went instead for nearby individuals; he murdered two and injured two others - none of whom were affiliated with the synagogue. "German authorities [confirmed](#) the terror incident had an anti-Semitic motive and said that Balliet, a right-wing extremist, was both inspired by similar attacks and had hoped to inspire others to imitate him." ([ADL](#))

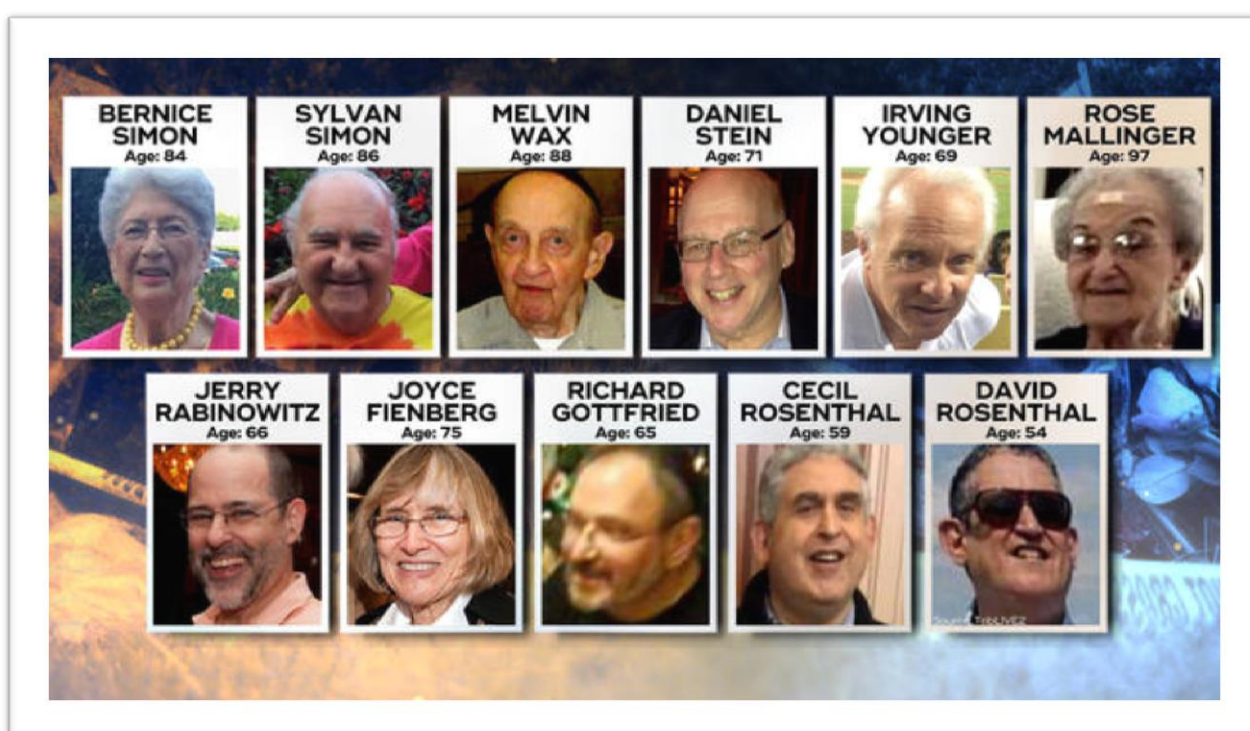


Illustration 9 - The Pittsburgh Synagogue shooting Victims (source: cbsnews)

## The Survey on anti-Semitism

On November 11, 2019, a global survey of 18 countries was published by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). Here, I present the [key findings](#) of their Press Release.

- **Anti-semitic Attitudes**

Of the 14 European countries polled by the ADL, nearly one out of every four residents (25%) fell into the most anti-semitic category, meaning that they believe in the majority of anti-Semitic stereotypes tested in the Index.

- **Anti-Semitic Stereotypes**

In Central and Eastern Europe, the stereotype about Jewish control of business and financial markets are widespread and persistent. When asked whether they agree with the statement "Jews have too much power in the business world", 72% of Ukrainians, 71% of Hungarians, 56% of Poles and 50% of Russians agreed.

- **Dual Loyalty/Disloyalty**

In western European countries, the anti-Semitic stereotype of dual loyalty remains widespread. More than 40% of the public in Austria, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain believe that Jews are more loyal to Israel than their own country. It scored even higher in Brazil (75%) and South Africa (60%). Canada, while scoring on the overall index 8%, scores 25% here.

- **"Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust"**

In many European countries that were polled, this statement was supported by large segments of the population. Even in Germany it polled by 42%. Other countries where it was prevalent: Austria (44%), Belgium (40%), Italy (38%) and Spain (37%).

- **Political Discourse and anti-Semitism**

In Poland, Holocaust remembrance and restitution issues have been important political issues too. When asked whether they agreed with the statement "Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust", 61% of them agreed in 2015. In 2019, this figure rose to 74%. For comparison, in Sweden it scored 15%, in the United Kingdom it registered 18% and in the Netherlands 31%.

- **Anti-Semitic Stereotypes among Muslims**

In the six countries tested (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the UK), it was substantially higher than among the national population. However, at the same time they scored significantly lower than for respondents in the Middle East and North Africa (polled in 2014). The ADL concludes that it is possibly reflecting the impact of Holocaust education, exposure to Jews, and societal values of acceptance and tolerance

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- **Decreases in anti-Semitism**

In Italy and Austria there was a considerable decrease in anti-Semitic attitudes. In Italy it fell by 11% and in Austria it decreased by 8%. Overall, it remained unchanged with Belgium polling at 24%; Germany at 15% and Denmark at 10%.



## Method of Research

On their website they also elaborate [how the surveys are done](#), so I'll include a partial description of it here too (similar to Science News I write about here).

For research on attitudes and opinions towards Jews, the Anti-Defamation League commissioned [First International Researches](#) to do the research in over 100 countries. The fieldwork and data collection for the global public opinion project were conducted and coordinated by [Anzalone Liszt Grove Research](#).

101 countries plus the Palestinian Territories in the West Bank & Gaza were surveyed. The means used for the interviews were landline telephones, mobile phones and face-to-face discussions in 96 languages. In total 53,100 interviews. The age of the citizens asked was 18 and over. Now to the margin of sampling error:

Surveyed Area	Margin of Error
Global Average	+0.97%
Countries/Territories (n=500 interviews)	+4.4%
Countries (n=1,000)	+3.2%

Table 4 - For sub-groups the margin of error is higher within each geography

All respondents were selected randomly. For landline phones and mobile phones, a random-digit dial sampling was used; for face-to-face discussions, geographically stratified, randomly-selected sampling points in each country was used.

Finally, in order to be indicative of the national population, the data was weighten n a number of demographic measures, including age, gender, religion, urban/rural location, ethnicity, and language spoken.

Before the survey began, the interviewer read the following statement to the interviewee:  
*"I am now going to read out a series of statements, some of them you may think are true and some of them you may think are false. Please say which ones you think are probably true and which ones you think are probably false."*

And the following eleven statements on Jewish stereotypes were used:

1. Jews are more loyal to Israel than to [this country/the countries they live in]<sup>1</sup>
2. Jews have too much power in international financial markets
3. Jews have too much control over global affairs

4. Jews think they are better than other people
5. Jews have too much control over the global media
6. Jews are responsible for most of the world's wars
7. Jews have too much power in the business world
8. Jews don't care what happens to anyone but their own kind
9. People hate Jews because of the way Jews behave
10. Jews have too much control over the United States government
11. Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust

<sup>1</sup> The following note was added to this statement: "Respondents living in countries with an estimated Jewish population greater than 10,000, or more than 0.1% of the overall population, or where ADL has surveyed in the past were read the statement "Jews are more loyal to Israel than to this country." Respondents residing elsewhere were read the statement "Jews are more loyal to Israel than to the countries they live in.""

## Jewish Culture

One of the best ways to combat prejudices is to learn about a culture, in this case Judaism. In this entry I begin with an introduction to the Jewish calendar and holidays.

### Jewish Calendar<sup>1</sup>

The calendar of the Jews is a lunar calendar. In order to ensure that each month in a year remains in the same season, the position of the sun is observed and adjustments made accordingly. During the [Talmudic era](#) (70 CE - 500 CE; begins with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple, ends with the Babylonian Talmud being recorded), Jewish scholars determined the length of one lunar month to be 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes and 3 1/3 seconds; when compared with modern research results, they missed the actual length of a lunar month by only 1/3 seconds.

The months are counted from Spring onwards, whereas a year starts in the seventh month.

## The Jewish Months and their Special Dates

Jewish Month	Approximate Secular Date	This Month's Special Dates
Nissan	March–April	Passover
Iyar	April–May	Lag B'Omer
Sivan	May–June	Shavuot
Tammuz	June–July	
Menachem Av	July–August	Tisha B'Av
Elul	August–September	
Tishrei	September–October	The High Holidays (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur), Sukkot, Shmini Atzeret, and Simchat Torah
Marcheshvan	October–November	
Kislev	November–December	Chanukah
Tevet	December–January	Conclusion of Chanukah
Shevat	January–February	Tu B'Shvat
Adar	February–March	Purim

Table 5 - (source: Chabad.org)

**Amount of days in each months:**

Nissan - 30 days

Iyar - 29 days

Sivan - 30 days

Tammuz - 29 days

Menachem Av - 30 days

Elul - 29 days

Tishrei - 30 days

Marchesvan - 29 or 30 days

Kislev - 30 or 29 days

Tevet - 29 days

Shevat - 30 days

Adar - 29 days

The reason why the Jewish calendar begins so differently is given on the website linked beneath the table: *"Nissan is the first month on the Jewish calendar. Before the Jews left Egypt, on the first day of the month of Nissan, G-d told Moses and Aaron: "This chodesh (new moon, or month) shall be to you the head of months. Thus the peculiarity of the Jewish calendar: the year begins on Rosh Hashanah, the first day of the month of Tishrei (the anniversary of the creation of Adam and Eve), but [Tishrei](#) is not the first month. [Rosh Hashanah](#) is actually referred to in the [Torah](#) as "the first day of the seventh month."*

As it is with the calendar most of us are familiar with, twelve (lunar) months are one year. However, there are 354 days in a year (6 months with 30 days and 6 months with 29 days). In a cycle of 19 years the lunar year is compensated with the solar year, since 19 solar years amount to 228 months it equals to roughly 235 lunar months. In the 19-year period, one month with 30 days is added seven times. Thus, the Jewish calendar contains 30-month leapyears which usually incorporate 384 days.

However, it gets even further complicated. The beginning of a new year doesn't always occur on the astronomically determined day, instead it is postponed. The most common and most important reason for this is cultural, a New Year's Day must therefore never be on a Sunday, Wednesday or Friday. If it is astronomically determined that New Year's Day occurs one of the aforementioned days, the beginning of the year will be postponed.

Here we see why two of the months in the calendar have 30 or 29 days, if it is necessary it can be easily adjusted. This way, there are six types of years in the Jewish calendar: the regularly occurring *common year* with 354 days, the *odd year* with 355 days and the *deficient year* with 353 days. In addition, there are leapyears with 383, 384 and 385 days.

## The Babylonian Calendar

(source: <https://webpace.science.uu.nl/~gent0113/babylon/babycal.htm>)

The Jewish/Hebrew calendar is based on the Babylonian calendar, the latter experienced many changes over time until they settled at the 19-year cycle in 500 BCE.

As the website - linked above - explains:

***Initially**, the insertion of an intercalary month was probably decided by considering various non-astronomical signs, such as the weather, the flight of migratory birds, the ripening of fruits and crops, etc.*

***Later** the insertion of an intercalary month appears to have based on the observation of the **heliacal rising** of certain stars such as MUL.MUL (**Pleiades**) or MUL.KAK.SI.SA (**Sirius**). Continued observations of the heliacal rising of selected stars probably led to the discovery of regular intercalation patterns such as the 8-year and 19-year cycles.*

***After about 535 BCE** regular intercalation schemes were used, first the [octaeteris](#) (with three intercalary months in every eight years) and, **after about 500 BCE**, the **19-year cycle** (with seven intercalary months in each cycle). Counting from the first year of [Nabonassar](#) (747 BCE), the years 3, 6, 8, 11, 14 and 19 were augmented by adding an extra Addāru [Addāru šanû = Addāru II = XIIb] at the end of the year and an additional Ulûlû [Ulûlû šanû = Ulûlû II = VIb] in the middle of year 17 [counting from 1 SE, the begin of the [Seleucid Era](#), the intercalary years were 1, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15 and 18 in each 19-year cycle].*

[Babylonia](#) occupied an area in southeastern Mesopotamia between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers (where now southern Iraq is located, more specifically from around Baghdad to the Persian Gulf). As Babylonia was the capital for centuries, the entire culture in this region would later be described as Babylonian.

It was first settled in 4000 BCE and until it rose to political prominence around ca. 1850 BCE, the area was divided between Sumer in the southeast and Akkad in the northwest. In 539 BCE, the Persians under Cyrus the Great captured Babylonia from Nebuchadnezzar's last successor [Nabonidus](#) (reign: 556-539 BCE).

Alexander the Great conquered Babylon in 331 BCE, while he planned to make Babylon the capital of his new empire, the Seleucids abandoned Babylon after his death.















Nr.	Month names								Approximate equivalent in the Julian calendar
	Babylonian	Hebrew	Old Persian	Achaemenian Elamite	Elamite	Macedonian(#)			
						earlier correlation	later correlation		
I		Nīsannu	Nīsān	Ādukanaiša	Hadukannaš	Zikli	Artemisios	Xanthikos	March-April-May
II		Ayyāru	Iyyār	Īūravāhara	Turmar	Zarpakim	Daisios	Artemisios	April-May-June
III		Šimannu	Šiwān	Ēāigraciš	Sākurriziš	Hadar	Panemos	Daisios	May-June-July
IV		Du'ūzu	Tammūz	Garmapada	Karmabataš	Hallime	Loös	Panemos	June-July-August
V		Ābu	Āb	???	Turnabaziš	Zillatam	Gorpiaios	Loös	July-August-September
VI		Ulūlū	Elūl	???	Karbašiyaš	Belilit	Hyperberetaios	Gorpiaios	August-September-October
VII		Tašritu	Tišrī	Bāgayādiš	Bakeyatiš	Manšarki	Dios	Hyperberetaios	September-October-November
VIII		Araḫsamna	Marḫešwān	*Vrkazana	Markašanaš	Lankelli	Apellaios	Dios	October-November-December
IX		Kisilīmu	Kislēw	Āḫiyādiya	Hašiyatiš	Šibari	Audynaioi	Apellaios	November-December-January
X		Ṭebētu	Ṭēbēt	Anāmaka	Hanamakaš	Šermi	Peritios	Audynaioi	December-January-February
XI		Šabātu	Šebāṭ	*Owayauvā	Samiyamaš	Kutmama	Dystros	Peritios	January-February-March
XII		Addāru	Adēr	Viyax(a)na	Miyakannaš	Aššetukpi	Xanthikos	Dystros	February-March-April

Table 6 - According to the website, a shift of one month occurred in "the correlation of the Macedonian months with the Babylonian months" between 31 CE and 46/47 CE

When it comes to the week itself, it is the same as ours: there are seven days. However, they do not have names and are instead designated [ordinal numbers](#). Only the seventh day of the week has a name: the resting day Sabbath.



Illustration 10 - A Kiddush cup, Shabbat candles and a challah cover.

(image: source: [Wikipedia](#))

The length is of course the same too, being 24 hours, but the day begins at 6 o'clock in the evening. Whereas our day starts at midnight, their day starts at nightfall as soon as three stars are visible<sup>1</sup>. Hence Sabbath and the holidays begin in the evening before. Christianity kept this way of counting for Christmas, that's why it is called "Christmas Eve".

Lastly, the starting point of the yearly count is the creation of the world, according to Judaism it took place in 3761 BCE. They came to this conclusion by counting back the in the bible contained genealogies and years of existence until arriving by Adam.

**Note:** My main source was a book about Jewish holidays, written in German. So, this became more of a translation of the pages except for the external information (links).

## **Jewish Holidays<sup>1</sup>**

There are different kinds of festive and commemoration days in the Jewish calendar: firstly, there's Sabbath and the holidays; secondly, there are the so-called semi-festive days, and finally there are the days of remembrance.

Among them is Sabbath the most important weekly resting day, the others are separated into two groups:

- a) the solemn festive days
- b) the joyful festive days

The first group consists of two festivals:

1. the New Year (Rosh Hashanah) on 1. and 2. Tishrei
2. the Day of Reconciliation (Yom Kippur) on 10. Tishrei

The second group consists of the three so-called pilgrimage festivals:

1. Passover from 15.-22. Nissan
2. Shavuot (Fest of Weeks) on 6. and 7. Sivan
3. Succoth (Fest of Booths) from 15.-23. Tishrei

Next to main festive days there exist semi-festive days and commemoration days, the latter is separated into joyful and mournful (days of fasting).

The semi-festive days consist of:

- a) New Moon Day
- b) The days between Passover and Sukkot

However, in Israel there's only one holiday at the beginning of Passover and at the end of Sukkot, thus the second day is already a festive-day. Likewise the second day of the Fest of Weeks does not apply there.



Now to the commemoration days, first the most important among the joyful:

- a) Hanukkah (Festival of the Dedication of the Temple), 8 days starting on 25. Kislev
- b) Purim (Losfest) on 14. Adar
- c) 15. Shevat (New Year Festival of the Trees)
- d) Lag BaOmer (the 33rd day between Passover and Shavuot) on 18. Iyar

Lastly, the mournful days - four of whom are connected to the siege and destruction of the temple:

- a) 3. Tishrei
- b) 10. Tevet
- c) 17. Tammuz
- d) 9. Menachem Av
- e) 13. Adar, the day before Purim (called [Ta'anit Esther](#), the Fast of Esther)

### Shabbat

Regularly occurring resting days were unknown in ancient times, that's why the introduction of the Shabbat by Judaism, as a day of rest after six workdays, was a great social achievement. In the [Pentateuch](#) it is said that no work is to be carried out on this day, the same goes for servants, foreigners and cattle.

### The Pentateuch

(source: <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12011-pentateuch>)

By the Pentateuch the five books of Moses are meant. It is a Greek adaptation of the Hebrew expression "ḥamishshah ḥumshe ha-Torah" (five-fifths of the Law). Referring to the books Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, indicating that they are meant to be seen as a whole. The authorship, except for the last eight verses describing Moses' death, is considered to be Moses himself. However, the inconsistencies and 'seeming contradictions' attracted the attention of Rabbis who sought to reconcile them.

*"A catena of such reconciliations was given by Manasseh ben Israel in his "Conciliador" (1651). Abraham ibn Ezra was, however, the only Jewish exegete in the Middle Ages to cast any doubt upon the Mosaic authorship, and then only obscurely and with regard to a few detached passages, as in the instances of the reference to the Canaanite (Gen. xii. 6), that to Og's bedstead (Deut. iii. 11), and that to Moses (ib. xxxix. 9; see his commentary on Deut. i. 1). Spinoza, in his "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus" (1671, viii, ix.), goes so far as to attribute the composition of the Pentateuch not to Moses, but to Ezra, which view appears to have existed even in the time of the Apocrypha (comp. II Esd. xiv. 21-22). This and other denials of Mosaic authorship led to a new line of defense by Richard Simon, who regarded the Pentateuch as being made up by Moses from earlier documents. This was followed by the hypothesis of [Astruc](#), that the book of Genesis was made up by Moses from two sources, one of which used the word "Elohim" for God, and the other "Yhwh."*

On the day of Sabbath (which starts Friday evening, one must visit a Synagogue to say their prayers - for the rest of the week one is allowed to do it in their home. For the celebration of Shabbat in one's home, the housewife prepares a plate with two loafs of bread and covers them with a cloth. As you have already seen in the photo above, a wine is prepared as well and Shabbath candles lit (usually two). However, as lighting the candle is considered an activity, it is prohibited during Shabbat which is why it must be done on the day before. Traditionally, this ritual is the task of the housewife.



**Illustration 11 - Two Sabbath Candlesticks; originally they belonged to Henriette Steinhausen. Her granddaughter Rose Steinhausen gave both to the [Jewish Museum in Frankfurt](#)**

There are three obligatory meals: in the evening, in the morning and in the afternoon. Before one partakes of the morning meal, the religious service in a Synagogue must be attended. Due to the length of the mass it is done in the late morning. The religious service consists of the morning prayer with lectures of the Tora and prophets, as well as an additional prayer that is relatively long. After returning from the Synagogue, the wine blessing is performed by the head of the household and blessings spoken. Here, the two loafs of bread are necessary.



Illustration 12 - A Kiddush cup made by Conrad Klein around 1715/1719  
(source: [Germanic National Museum](#))

The Havdalah marks the end of Shabbat. It is Hebrew for "separation" and refers to the separation made at the end of Shabbath or a Jewish holiday, to separate the holy from the mundane. Jewish days begin and end with nightfall, that's why it can only be said when darkness has fallen on Saturday night.

A brief version of the process as explained [on Chabad](#):

- 1. Grasping a cup brimming with kosher grape juice or wine, the leader recites a series of nine joyful quotes from the Hebrew Bible. The hagafen blessing, which is always said before drinking wine, is then recited, and everyone responds with "Amen."*
- 2. The reader then says another short blessing, which is again followed by "Amen." Everyone then takes a good whiff of aromatic herbs, oils or spices.*
- 3. After the next blessing, everyone responds with "Amen" and draws their fingers near the flame so that they can see the candle's light reflecting on their fingernails.*
- 4. The reader recites a slightly longer blessing, which is followed by a final "Amen," and then sits down to drink the wine.*

It becomes a multisensory experience through the use of wine, herbs and light.

And while it may sound contradictory, this separation also serves as connection to the rest of the week: *"When the boundaries between the holy and the ordinary are blurred, the holy is no longer holy and the ordinary is left with nothing to uplift it. By defining the separation of Shabbat from the workday week, the relationship between the two is also established—a relationship in which Shabbat imparts its transcendent vision to the rest of the week, and the six days of daily life feed into, and are sublimated within, the sanctity of Shabbat."*

The candle is extinguished with the overflowed wine (deliberately done to symbolize the *"overflowing cup of blessings"* Jews wish for the upcoming week).

## End

It is an enormous and continuous effort to combat antisemitism, and for it to succeed civil society must get involved - write, organize, talk and/or read. Whether you write on your own blog (as I do) or a reader's letter; whether you organize something on a national or local level (perhaps you are already a member of a party or organization); whether you talk to friends or make new contacts to join or build-up a network; or whether you read books, magazines or online articles about it. Active involvement encompasses a lot!

As for the Iron Front, or the new version of it (whatever the alliance may be called at the end): the democratic system of division of powers, human rights & civil rights, protection of minorities and combatting the anti-democratic and reactionary forces is essential.

Only a functioning democracy can guarantee equal treatment of minorities; it provides and protects the ability to organize, the free speech to criticize and the safety to freely develop oneself - it all comes down to us, the people.

All power comes from the people, let's use this power to fiercely combat the reactionaries and authoritarians who seek to abolish the democratic system, spread hatred to sow division and tell lies to dilute reality.

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