

Grade 9

The Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre is pleased to offer a series of eight (8) units covering the following Grade 9 CAPS topic:

Failure of the Weimar, the rise of Nazi Germany, outbreak of WW2 in Europe, the Holocaust, people's experiences and resistance.

Unit 4

- People's experiences: Why the Jews?

By the end of the unit Learners should be familiar with

1. The term antisemitism
2. How Jewish people were viewed in the Christian World
3. How anti-Jewish sentiment changes with events in society

According to the Nazis the Jewish people had Jewish blood and that was the worst of all.

Anitsemittism – “the longest hatred”

- A particular kind of **racial** hatred that presents Jews as a **race** rather than a religious group and community
- Shows Jews and Judaism **only** in a negative light
- Any meeting or teaching that seeks to degrade Jewish people or to threaten them

Being Jewish means to follow the religion of Judaism.

If you are Jewish, you follow the religion and customs of Judaism in the same way that if you are Christian, you follow the religion and customs of Christianity.

If you are Muslim, you follow the religion and customs of Islam.

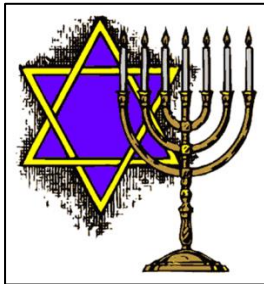
You may be more religious or less religious, or not religious at all but you identify with that religion.

Antisemitism:

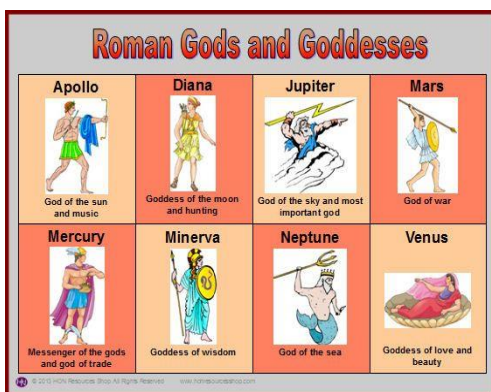
We have said that antisemitism is a racial hatred.

But prior to (before) it became a racial hatred...

It was also a religious hatred – and in some cases still is.



Jews = one God



Romans = many gods



- Before the birth of Jesus in the area, today known as Israel and Palestine, Jews were persecuted because they followed the only religion which recognized one God
- This angered the Romans, who were in charge at the time. The head of the Romans believed himself to be holy. The Romans believed in many gods
- When Jesus was born, he was born Jewish, lived as a Jew, he preached as a Jew, preaching to both the Romans and to Jewish people
- He was preaching to everybody. He angered the Jewish priests and he angered the Romans who then crucified him. The Jews did not have the power to crucify anybody
- The Romans were in charge and crucified Jesus who died as a Jew.



In the 4th Century under Emperor Constantine Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

The Romans now believed that Christianity had superseded or taken over Judaism and that everyone should become Christian.

- But Jewish people did not and still do not accept that Jesus was the son of God or the Messiah, the bringer of peace on earth
- For Jewish people there is only one God. The Romans were very angry with the Jews and blamed them for the death of Jesus, and then they said only the devil would kill God
- So the idea of Jews as the devil was born and started to be preached and it emerged in a lot of artworks
- **The image you see is of a Jew with horns and a tail being depicted as the devil.**



An early (13th century) illustration of Jews wearing pointed hats in accordance with the order by Pope Innocent III at the Lateran Council of 1215

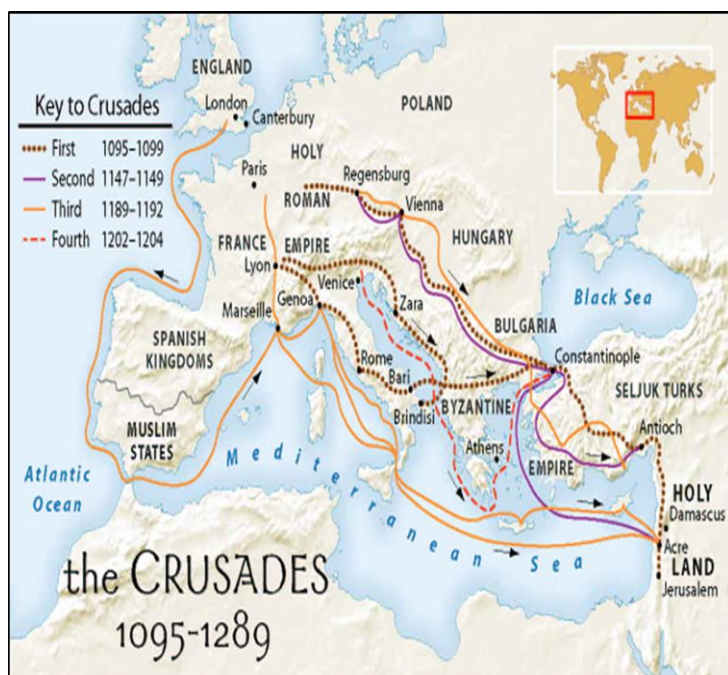
- The Jews were shunned. They were treated as outsiders
- They were always pressured to convert to Christianity
- But when they didn't, they were excluded from many occupations and activities in society. So the only job they were allowed to do was to be moneylenders. And whose money were they lending? They were lending money that belonged to Christians
- The Christian church didn't allow Christians to charge each other interest so they used the Jew as the middle man
- **Stereotypes** about Jewish people and money are born from this
- They were used as a **scapegoat** in many situations during the Middle Ages



Jews were used as a scapegoat and blamed for the ills of society:

- One particular instance was the bubonic plague. It spread through Europe in the Middle Ages, killing millions of people
- How did the plague come to be? Rats that came on ships from different countries, were full of fleas that bit those rats and then bit humans and so the plague was transmitted
- People died in their millions
- Because they didn't understand what was happening they turned to their usual and regular scapegoat, the Jews
- They accused the Jews of bringing the plague by poisoning the water in their wells.
- Jews were attacked and murdered in their thousand and they were expelled from European cities all through the Middle Ages





The Crusades, which took place between the 11th and 13th century, were when Christians moved towards the Holy Land in order to convert everybody to Christianity and recapture the Holy Land. On their way, they massacred many, many Muslims and many, many Jews.



During The Spanish Inquisition (1478 - 1765) Jews were also forced to convert to Christianity, they were tortured and burned to death if they refused to convert.



In the 20th Century

- The Nazis, when they came to power, used religious, social and racial antisemitism with the focus on Jewish blood

- With the American and French revolutions people were looking more at the state, their country, rather than the church
- During the Enlightenment, the age of reason, philosophers and thinkers said everybody should have equal rights including Jews
- Jews should enjoy the freedom of religion as everyone else does Things were a little better for Jews until the 19th century, until the theory of race and the idea of different people having different kinds of blood took root
- It was said that Jews were a race
- So the rise of racial anti-Jewish prejudices came about and anti-Jewish racism was born

QUESTIONS

1. Give a reason why you think Jews did not want to convert to Christianity?
2. Give an example of Jewish people being made scapegoats and say why this was.
3. Do you think there is such a thing as “Jewish” blood, or “Christian” blood, or “Muslim” blood?
4. Give a reason for your answer.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre:

<http://ctholocaust.co.za/>

Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwVBU5VqvsumuwDdzYIAaQ>

Yadvashem.org

https://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205742.pdf

ushmm.org

<https://www.ushmm.org/antisemitism/what-is-antisemitism>

<https://www.ushmm.org/antisemitism/what-is-antisemitism/antisemitism-today>