

Why Did Adolf Hitler Hate the Jews?

By David B. Green, this is an excerpt from an article than first appeared on Haaretz on Jan 27, 2018

In *Mein Kampf*, published in two volumes, in 1925 and 1926, Hitler himself explains that he had no special feelings about Jews before he moved to Vienna, in 1908, and that even then, initially, he thought favorably of them. He saw the light only after Germany's loss in World War I, for which he held the Jews responsible.

During the second half of the 19th century, as the Jews emancipation throughout most of Europe led to their increasing integration into society and into the modern economy, it elicited a backlash. Anti-Semitism, some of it murderous, rose across the continent, including in Germany. When the Jews were kept apart in the ghetto, and limited to certain professions, it was possible to accuse them of clannishness, and resent the interest they charged on loans. But when they emerged from the ghetto, and became captains of industry and finance, and socially and intellectually prominent, there was a whole new set of reasons to hate them. The success of the emancipated Jews was perhaps even more galling than the poverty and degradation of disenfranchised Jews – and it gave rise to racial theories that posited an essential biological difference in them.

When imperial Germany went down to defeat in 1918, and Kaiser Wilhelm, the German emperor, was forced to abdicate, a popular theory that Germany had been stabbed in the back by the Jews took hold. Jews role, on the one hand, in the socialist and Communist movements that led revolutions in both Germany and Russia, and their prominence in international finance, on the other, led to dark theories about Jews lack of national loyalty, their treachery, and their degeneracy.

In Hitler's mind, all the groups that he saw as foiling Germany – Bolsheviks, socialists, social democrats – became identified with Jews, because indeed, Jews were so prominently represented among each of them. His political theories blended with increasingly technical racial theories that imagined the Jews, along with other groups like Slavs and Gypsies, as biologically inferior to Aryans, the white northern European race that pure Germans were presumed to belong to.

However perverted his thinking and outrageous his theories, though, and whatever personal experiences he did have that may have turned him against Jews, Hitler was supported at every level of German society by people who were ready to see their country return to the greatness they felt had been denied it, and to believe that it was the Jews who were responsible for that fall from grace.