

Episode 22: How Antisemitism Has Shaped the World

Guest: Prof. Dr. Magda Teter, Chair of Judaic Studies and History, Fordham University; President, American Academy of Jewish Research

Hosts: Yusuf & Mert

Bio:

Professor Magda Teter is one of the most respected contemporary historians of antisemitism. She was recommended by David Nirenberg, whose work is foundational for understanding how antisemitism has shaped Western thought, to cover this essential segment. Her scholarship illuminates the historical roots and enduring systemic impact of antisemitic tropes. She is the author of *Christian Supremacy: Reckoning with the Roots of Antisemitism and Racism* (2023) and *Blood Libel: On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth* (2020), which won the National Jewish Book Award, the Ronald Bainton Prize (2021) from the Sixteenth Century Studies Society and the George L. Mosse Prize from the American Historical Association (2021) that is awarded once a year to „an outstanding major work of extraordinary scholarly distinction, creativity, and originality in the intellectual and cultural history of Europe since 1500.“ Professor Teter has received prestigious fellowships, including from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, and the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies at Harvard University. She has served as co-editor of the *Association for Jewish Studies Review* and as Vice-President for Publications of the Association for Jewish Studies. She is currently President of the American Academy for Jewish Research.

In this Episode:

In this episode, Professor Magda Teter takes listeners on a comprehensive journey through the history of antisemitism, tracing its origins from ancient times to the present. She examines how early antisemitic narratives, including the infamous blood libel myth, evolved under the influence of Christian theology and persisted across centuries, shaping Western thought and societal structures to this day. The discussion explores the development of conspiracy theories about Jewish power, the interplay between antisemitism and racism, and the concept of Christian supremacy as a framework for understanding the systemic nature of antisemitism. Professor Teter also addresses contemporary forms of antisemitism, including how they manifest in anti-Israel discourse, the challenges of defining antisemitism in modern contexts, and its manifestations beyond the Western world. The conversation further reflects the role of Christian institutions in perpetuating prejudice, the persecutions that led to the rise of Zionism, and historical continuities and ruptures leading to the Holocaust. Prof. Teter is offering listeners both a historical perspective and critical tools to understand antisemitism today without centering perpetrators.

Links:

Prof. Dr. Magda Teter (Fordham University): <https://www.fordham.edu/academics/departments/history/faculty/magda-teter/>

Teter, Magda. *Blood Libel: On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020.

<https://www.hup.harvard.edu/books/9780674240933> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Maps and historical sources tracing the Trail of this Antisemitic Myth can be found here:

<https://thebloodlibeltrail.org/the-sources/> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Teter, Magda. *Christian Supremacy: Reckoning with the Roots of Antisemitism and Racism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2023.

<https://press.princeton.edu/books/hardcover/9780691242583/christian-supremacy?srltid=AfmBOoqh4cjyrZcaR0nTZhFbs2zvBP4ina1vpbiwkNWGw-gRAUDbPMrr> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Further Resources:

Schäfer, Peter. *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward Jews in the Ancient World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Schäfer, Peter. *Judenhass und Judenfurcht: Die Entstehung des Antisemitismus in der Antike*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997.)

<https://www.hup.harvard.edu/books/9780674487789> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

<https://www.suhrkamp.de/buch/peter-schaefer-judenhass-und-judenfurcht-t-9783458710288> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Nirenberg, David. *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013.

Nirenberg, David. *Anti-Judaismus: Die Geschichte eines westlichen Vorurteils*. München: C. H. Beck, 2015.

https://wwnorton.com/books/9780393347913?utm_source=chatgpt.com/about-the-book (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

<https://www.chbeck.de/nirenberg-anti-judaismus/product/14295322> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Transsubstantiation & the Blood Libel Myth

In this episode, Magda Teter connects the blood libel myth to the Catholic belief in transubstantiation. This is a technical term from Catholic theology referring to the central ritual of the Mass, a religious service, during which bread and wine are shared in remembrance of Jesus' Last Supper before his death. Catholics believe that, through this ritual, the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ, even though they retain the appearance of bread and wine. Because this ritual is considered essential for salvation, medieval Christians imagined that Jews desecrated it by using the blood of innocent children. This accusation built on the oldest anti-jewish claim - that Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus. Over time, the blood libel became one of the most enduring antisemitic myths, with echoes that persist today in portrayals of Jews as deliberate child-killers.

Comparison of the three main Definitions of Antisemitism (IHRA, JDA, Nexus): https://thirdnarrative.org/three-definitions-of-antisemitism-a-comparison/?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Prof. Teter's Literature recommendations on Antisemitism:

Konopnicka, Maria. "Mendel of Gdańsk (A Sketch)." In: *Stranger in Our Midst: Images of the Jew in Polish Literature*, edited with an introduction by Harold B. Segel, 221-238. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996.

Zweig, Stefan. *The World of Yesterday: An Autobiography*. Translated by Benjamin W. Huebsch and Helmut Ripperger; introduction by Harry Zohn. New York: Viking Press, 1943.

Zweig, Stefan. *Die Welt von gestern: Erinnerungen eines Europäers*. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1985.

Feuchtwanger, Lion. *The Oppermanns*. Translated by James Cleugh; revised translation and introduction by Joshua Cohen. McNally Editions, 2022.

Feuchtwanger, Lion. *Die Geschwister Oppermann*. Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 2008. 8. Auflage.

de Waal, Edmund. *Letters to Camondo*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021.

de Waal, Edmund. *Camondo: Eine Familiengeschichte in Briefen*. Übersetzt ins Deutsche. Berlin: Hanser Literaturverlage, 2021.

On the Rise of Antisemitism in Germany:

Annual Report of Antisemitic Incidents in Germany 2024 by RIAS: https://report-antisemitism.de/documents/04-06-25_Antisemitic_incidents_in_Germany_Annual-Report_Federal_Association_RIAS_2024.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

RIAS Analysis of the Rise of Antisemitism since October 7: https://report-antisemitism.de/documents/25-10-06_BVRIAS_Politischer-Antisemitismus-7-Oktober.pdf (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Kompetenzzentrum für Antisemitismusforschung und -strategien (KOAS). *Zwischenbericht: Studie zu den Auswirkungen des 7. Oktober 2023 auf jüdische und israelische Communities in Deutschland*. KOAS – Bildung und Forschung, Sept. 2025. <https://koas-bildungundforschung.de/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/ZwischenberichtStudieAuswirkungen7Oktober.pdf> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

On Jewish Experiences since October 7 in Germany:

Kolot (englisch: voices), Perspectives on October 7: <https://www.jmberlin.de/veranstaltungen-kolot-stimmen> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Chernivsky, Marina. *Bruchzeiten: Leben nach dem 7. Oktober*. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2025. https://www.fischerverlage.de/verlag/rights/book/marina-chernivsky-bruchzeiten-9783103977127?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Friedman, Michel. *Judenhass: 7. Oktober 2023*. Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 2024. https://www.piper.de/buecher/judenhass-isbn-978-3-8270-1515-0?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Please also check out our other episodes to explore multiple perspectives:

On Jewish Experiences of October 7: Udi Goren, Michel Friedman, Yael Danieli, Tirzah Firestone, Sapir Huberman, Eyal Benvenisti, Benjamin Fischer, Anita Haviv

On Racism and Antisemitism: Naika Foroutan, Ken Stern, Elad Lapidot/Hannah Tzuberi, Benjamin Fischer, Anita Haviv, Norman Stillman, Volker Weiss

On Zionism: Michael Brenner, Simon Fischer, Gudrun Krämer

On the Holocaust: Derek Penslar, Oren Kessler, Yael Danieli, Tirzah Firestone

Dedication:

We dedicate this Podcast to all victims and survivors of October 7, the hostages and their families, to all innocent civilians killed and injured in Gaza and their grieving families and friends. To our dear guests Udi Goren, Khalil Sayegh, Sima and Mai who shared their losses so powerfully with us. To their families: Tal's wife Ella Haimi, their children Nir, Einav, Udi and Lotan, who never got the chance to meet his father. To Khalil Sayegh's mother and siblings, to Mai's and Sima's family, to her mother Bushra.

To the blessed memory of: Tal Haimi, Lara Sayegh, Jeris Sayegh, Mahmoud, Danny Darlington and Haim Perry.

Disclaimer:

In each episode of this podcast, the invited guests speak on their own behalf. They share their experiences, assessments, and expert perspectives. These contributions are central to the multiperspectivity of the project but do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial team or producers.

Legal & Historical Anchor Episodes:

This podcast may include controversial legal terms of specific technical significance. Their legal applicability requires a thorough expert contextualization; for this, we refer to our legal chapter. All relevant terms of international law, its institutions, current controversies, and the state of jurisprudence are explained in the anchor episode with Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Claus Kreß LL.M. (Cambridge) (Episode 36). He is co-author of the Rome Statute, Special Advisor to the International Criminal Court, and Judge at the International Court of Justice in the parallel Gambia vs. Myanmar genocide case.

Historical matters are discussed from multiple perspectives in this podcast. Please check the cross-references in the shownotes of the respective episodes for details. All historically contested issues are addressed in the history anchor episode with Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Gudrun Krämer (Episode 21), author of the comprehensive work *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel* (Princeton 2008), a standard reference in the field. For her scholarly achievements as a historian, she was awarded the *Preis des Historischen Kollegs* in 2025, the highest distinction in her discipline in Germany.