



# The Definition of Anti-Semitism

By Kenneth L. Marcus

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What is anti-Semitism? The Definition of Anti-Semitism is the first book-length study to explore this central question in the context of the new anti-Semitism. Previous efforts to define 'anti-Semitism' have been complicated by the disreputable origins of the term, the discredited sources of its etymology, the diverse manifestations of the concept, and the contested politics of its applications. Nevertheless the task is an important one, not only because definitional clarity is required for the term to be understood, but also because the current conceptual confusion prevents resolution of many incidents in which anti-Semitism is manifested. *The Definition of Anti-Semitism* explores the various ways in which anti-Semitism has historically been defined, demonstrates the weaknesses in prior efforts, and develops a new definition of anti-Semitism, especially in the context of the 'new anti-Semitism' in American higher education.

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## The Definition of Anti-Semitism By Kenneth L. Marcus Bibliography

- Rank: #579663 in Books
- Brand: Marcus Kenneth L
- Published on: 2015-09-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.40" h x 1.00" w x 9.20" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 296 pages

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## Editorial Review

### Review

"Well written and well documented, Prof. Marcus' new book on the definition of antisemitism is a timely publication: the recent rise of antisemitism worldwide has drawn attention to the crucial issue of defining it properly. Based on a vast variety of historic examples on the one hand, and referring to the present context on the other, Prof. Marcus offers insights and solutions that should be carefully listened to."

--Prof. Dina Porat, Chief Historian of Yad Vashem, Head of the Kantor Center, Tel Aviv University

"This book offers a smart guide to understanding what is at stake in efforts to define anti-Semitism today, and sheds light on the crucial question of the relation between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism."

--Maurice Samuels, Betty Jane Anlyan Professor of French, Yale University and Director of the Yale Program for the Study of Antisemitism

"Kenneth Marcus untangles an exceptionally gnarled subject and provides the solid, clear, and substantial groundwork for any future analysis or debate."

--Ruth R. Wisse, Professor Emerita, Harvard University and author of *Jews and Power*

"With great insight, Ken Marcus has written an eloquent and thorough study of the difficulties encountered in defining an anti-Semitism that is constantly transforming its modes of action and its role in social protests. The book explains the major impediments encountered in trying to deploy the law to combat a Jew-hatred that takes refuge in the moral high ground of exercising the right of free speech or behind the fire-wall of the academy. Noting that anti-Semitic rhetoric is gaining traction in mainstream publications as the memory of the Holocaust fades, Marcus has generated a narrative that is as moving as it is important."

--Donna Robinson Divine, Morningstar Family Professor of Jewish Studies and Professor of Government, Emerita, Smith College

"*The Definition of Anti-Semitism* provides a crystalline analysis of a subject which provokes widespread disagreement. Erudite and combative, obdurate yet subtle, the book's arguments will delight some readers and they will vex others. Beyond doubt, however, anyone who seeks to understand antisemitism will now need to reckon with Kenneth Marcus's account."

--David Feldman, Director, Pears Institute for the study of Antisemitism School of Social Science, History and Philosophy Birkbeck, University of London

"For the average reader, *The Definition of Anti-Semitism* is an often fascinating intellectual exercise. For those who are involved in the issue professionally - whether in law enforcement, academia, government, or organizations - it is, or should be, required reading." --Daniel M. Kimmel, *The Jewish Advocate*

"Kenneth L. Marcus has written a compelling book that will be of substantial interest to scholars, practitioners, and all who are interested in trying to understand what antisemitism actually is today"  
--Gunther Jikeli, *JUSTICE Magazine*

"Founder and president of the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law Kenneth Marcus offers an indispensable book about the manner in which anti-Semitism has evolved from the ancient world to the present, from religious anti-Judaism to secular anti-Semitism. The Definition of Anti-Semitism describes many instances of anti-Semitism that have occurred in recent years and examines why they constitute anti-Jewish hatred as the meaning of the term has evolved with the times...The most instructive sections of Marcus' book deal with how the international community (including the States) defines anti-Semitism towards Israel...This is a thoughtful book as well as an exemplary work of research which should be required reading for everyone concerned with the growing anti-Semitic attacks against Israel and Jews throughout the world."

--Jack Fischer, *The Jewish Book Council*

"In *The Definition of Anti-Semitism*, Kenneth Marcus... makes an excellent case that antisemitism cannot be excused or vitiated by its continuity with a protest against Israel's actions. As a handbook, the final sections of this study would be quite helpful to American, French, Russian and other leaders who have failed in recent times to condemn antisemitism unequivocally when it was in evidence. Marcus is seeking clarity on these issues for chiefly legal rather than political purposes, and within the confines of American and European legal traditions his arguments flow naturally and well."

--Timothy Snyder, *The Times Literary Supplement*

"Ken Marcus has a keen lawyer's mind and recounts disturbing cases in which it is the complainant of antisemitism rather than the alleged doer of antisemitic deeds who is treated worse in the courts. He shows good judgment in disposing of opposite but equally implausible positions: the implausibility of those who dismiss definitional issues, for instance, by simply affirming the omnipresence of anti-Jewish hatred, and the implausibility of those who insist on definitions, that so strict that all manner of actually antisemitic behaviour is excluded. In the most powerful sections of this book, Marcus illustrates through various legal cases in the US and Europe the problems which can arise both from an absence of definition and from the wrong kind of definition...The idea of a whole book by a clever lawyer defining antisemitism sounds dry, but it is a campaigning as well as analytical text..."

--Robert Fine, *Fathom*

"He structures his book around several recent acts of violence against Jews and gives much space to the modern displacement of anti-Jewish animus onto the Jewish state. The analysis is judicious, fair-minded, and deeply knowledgeable. Marcus seeks to provide clarity for those government agencies, NGOs, and individuals who strive to rid the world of the scourge of anti-Semitism. A difficult, important book."

--R.S Levy, University of Illinois at Chicago, *Choice*

"*The Definition of Anti-Semitism*" is erudite, interesting and well-written..."

--Haaretz

#### About the Author

**Kenneth L. Marcus**, Former Staff Director of the United States Commission on Civil Rights; former Lillie and Nathan Ackerman Chair in Equality and Justice in America, Baruch College School of Public Affairs; currently President and General Counsel of the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law; author of *Jewish Identity and Civil Rights in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

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##### **Frances York:**

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