Antisemitism is perhaps the most enduring form of religious or ethnic prejudice in human history. No single, well-defined reason can explain its strength in the past or present. At times hatred of Jews has derived from territorial concerns, social group rivalries, superstition, legend and fantasy. As we shall see, the reasons antisemites offer as justification for their enmity are far-reaching, illogical and contradictory.¹

This chapter defines antisemitism, taking care to differentiate it in the present day form from principled opposition to the state of Israel. Next, the chapter reviews major polls addressing antisemitism in recent years as well as various contemporary reports of antisemitism and opposition to Israel. Finally, the chapter applies the Modern Antisemitism-Israel Model (MASIM) in order to investigate the discrepancy between levels of antisemitism observed in United States and Canada and those observed in much of the rest of the world.

The term, “antisemitism” was coined in 1879 by German antisemitic Wilhelm Marr in order to provide a more intellectually acceptable alternative to the crude, blunt and religiously-based “hatred of Jews.” Marr and other late-nineteenth-century antisemites sought a term that lent legitimacy to their belief that the Jews needed to be opposed because of their so-called racial characteristics. Nowadays, few social scientists see much explanatory value in the concept of a Semitic grouping of peoples, although they still speak of Semitic languages. In common parlance, “antisemitism” continues to be used to describe Jew-hatred of all varieties. Some Arab nationalists spuriously argue that the term antisemitism cannot apply to Arabs although both groups share a common Semitic ethnicity. We will employ the well-established term antisemitism referring it solely to prejudice against Jews.²

² As new forms of antisemitism emerge, so do definitional problems. For the latest skirmish in the ongoing semantic and political war, see Kenneth L. Marcus, The Definition of Anti-Semitism (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).
The justifications for Jew-hatred shift radically from era to era and from location to location. Jews have at times experienced a double-bind: “damned if they do and damned if they don’t.” They have been criticized for being aloof, and for trying to assimilate. Jews have been condemned for being radical Communists, and for being avaricious capitalists. Fascists in Nazi Germany and 1980s Argentina accused their nations’ Jews of having hidden loyalties to socialist regimes, the Soviet Union, on the other hand, regularly persecuted its Jews for harboring secret sympathies for the capitalist West. Jews have been chastised as corrupt cosmopolitans and as insular traditionalists, as heretical free-thinkers and as mystical obscurantists. They are portrayed as being weak, ineffectual, and effete, but also plotting, tyrannical, and seeking global domination.

Jews have been seen as inherently evil throughout much of history in many parts of the world—the hate defying logic or explanation with periodic rises to mass killing and genocide. From the time the Romans expelled most Jews from Israel in 135 CE until the formation of Israel in 1948, Jews experienced expulsions, forced conversions, property confiscations, pogroms, humiliations, and mass executions across dozens of countries.

In recent decades, antisemitism has been joined by disturbing and overt expressions of hostility towards Israel that go beyond mere opposition to specific Israeli policies. The frequency of attacks on Jews in Europe seems to vary based on the presence and intensity of fighting in Gaza. Muslim clerics and Islamic heads of state regularly call for the killing Jews and destroying the Jewish state. Hamas and Iranian leaders have called for the elimination of Israel;