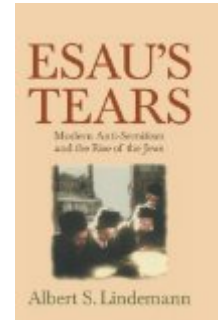


**Albert S. Lindemann.** *Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews.*  
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Albert Lindemann, Professor of History at the University of California at Santa Barbara, is well-known to scholars of modern antisemitism. His earlier book, *The Jew Accused*,<sup>[1]</sup> a comparative study of three antisemitic trials (Dreyfus in France, Beilis in Russia, and Frank in the United States), generated some controversy, but also received very favorable reviews and earned a place on many university reading lists. The prior accomplishments and professional standing of an author whose current book is under review would normally not be a relevant consideration. But this situation is not a normal one. Lindemann's new book, *Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews*, is a work of immense sweep and ambition, in which the author mounts a frontal assault on what he sees as the predominant beliefs about the nature, causes, and extent of antisemitism. Merely to call the book "provocative" would be to understate the intensity of the criticism it is likely to attract. Lest a constructive intellectual debate deteriorate into personal recriminations, readers and reviewers should bear in mind the author's record as an able, serious scholar whose sincere intention it is

to contribute to our understanding of antisemitism.

It should be stated at the outset that Lindemann does not deny that antisemitism has been a very significant factor in modern history, one that has been responsible for its share of human tragedies. Nonetheless, Lindemann contends that antisemitism has not been as widespread, pervasive, and destructive as is generally assumed. A Jewish historiography of victimization ("Leidensgeschichte"), he claims, has focused disproportionately on antisemitism as a sentiment among Gentiles and as a force that has shaped the destiny of Jews. Lindemann suggests that the historical master narrative that places antisemitism at the center has been constructed as an "ideology of revenge" (p. 14) against the Gentile majority. Such a view of history also serves the more practical purpose of "preventing suffering in the future, largely by exposing the sinful or corrupt nature of Gentile society and its responsibility for Jewish suffering" (p. 15). "Almost never," Lindemann continues, is the study of antisemitism seen as a

"means by which Jews could become aware of their own sins" (p. 15).

In Lindemann's view, antisemitism has not been merely the product of Gentile fantasies about Jews, but has to be understood in the context of real interactions between Gentiles and Jews. Lindemann is especially critical of the proposition that Christian religion (or religiosity) has been a primary source of antisemitism. Lindemann's emphasis is on the social and economic spheres, in the "everyday secular world" in which "Jews have been as capable as any other group of provoking hostility" (p. xvii).

One source of Gentile hostility toward Jews, in Lindemann's view, has been Jewish exclusivity. Although he concedes that survival as a despised minority in the corporate society of medieval Europe necessitated internal cohesion, Lindemann argues that Jews and Judaism (in its traditional form) had long maintained an attitude of exclusiveness that many Gentiles found offensive. Lindemann points to the Jewish idea of "chosenness," a Talmudic preoccupation with blood purity (pp. 72-73), and a contemptuous attitude toward "Goyim." The reference to Esau in the book's title reflects Lindemann's contention that Jews have been as guilty of making Gentiles into "the other" as have Gentiles in doing so to Jews (pp. 3-5).

As for the book's subtitle, Lindemann argues that hostility toward Jews has been exacerbated in modern times by the "Rise of the Jews" (p. 20), the term used by the author to encapsulate the successes achieved by many Jews in the economic sphere, in the professions, in cultural life, and in politics. While distancing himself from anti-semitic theories about Jewish conspiracies, Lindemann argues that there was a high degree of plausibility to the widespread subjective perception among Gentiles that Jews, "a once despised and legally set-apart group, seemed to be prospering more than others," and seemed to be "assuming power over non-Jews" (p. 21). "Anti-Semites," Lindemann writes, "believed that Jews were every-

where, and in a sense they were almost everywhere that counted in modern society, in significantly greater numbers than strict proportionality would have assured" (pp. 19-20). Employing terminology that is guaranteed to raise the ire of many readers, Lindemann observes that "western civilization is undeniably a 'jewified' civilization, however offensive the word may be to our ears because of the ugly use made of it by anti-Semites; it might as well be used proudly" (p. 19). Such provocative formulations complicate Lindemann's otherwise not especially controversial contention that "the goal of modern anti-Semites was to undo the rise of the Jews and the perceived threat of Jewish power and 'jewification' inherent in that rise" (p. 22). (It should be emphasized that Lindemann always surrounds the word "jewification" with quotation marks.)

The vast majority of the book's 545 pages of text are devoted to presenting the development of antisemitism in Europe since 1870 as a counter-narrative to what Lindemann sees as the consensus "Leidensgeschichte." Every notable anti-semitic event, personality, and intellectual movement comes up for discussion. And as they do, Lindemann challenges what he characterizes as the dominant interpretations. Lindemann suggests that Martin Luther did not leave a legacy of antisemitism in Lutheran Christianity (p. 38); that the Chmielnicki massacres of the seventeenth century were not as bad as Jewish historiography has maintained (p. 60); that oppression of Jews in Tsarist Russia was "less fearsome and less omnipresent" than is generally believed (p. 61); that Karl Lueger was an authentic champion of the downtrodden and crusader against capitalist corruption whose antisemitism was largely "theatrical" (pp. 337-47); that the antisemitism of Richard Wagner, Paul de Lagarde, Julius Langbehn, and Houston Stewart Chamberlain has been exaggerated and ripped out of historical context by historians such as Fritz Stern (pp. 347-54); and that during World War I Jewish Germans displayed

less nationalist enthusiasm than did non-Jewish Germans (p. 393).

The chronological and geographical scope of Lindemann's bold enterprise invites rebuttal from scholars working in a variety of historical fields. I will limit my own critique to a few major methodological and interpretive issues.

In one important respect, Lindemann is not nearly as revisionist as he claims to be. He does not give sufficient credit either to Jewish historiography or to the more specialized historiography of antisemitism. His description of a field dominated by *Leidensgeschichte* is an exaggeration bordering on caricature. Both in his preface (pp. x, xiv) and in his concluding chapter (p. 510) he suggests that the work of Daniel Goldhagen exemplifies problematic tendencies in the prevailing understanding of antisemitism. While it is true that Goldhagen's book enjoyed commercial success, its unbalanced, simplistic, teleological thesis was roundly condemned by most scholarly reviewers, many of whom are distinguished specialists on antisemitism and the Holocaust.<sup>[2]</sup> Given that Goldhagen's misrepresentation of the state of the Holocaust studies field was (justifiably) condemned by his reviewers, there is some irony in Lindemann's misleading suggestion that Goldhagen is somehow typical.

The use of Goldhagen as a straw man is illustrative of a broader tendency in Lindemann's work to confuse serious scholarship with popular culture, as well as with popular wisdom that might be prevalent in some Jewish circles. With regard to scholarship about the Holocaust, Lindemann notes the prevalence of an "angry, declamatory" style that dwells upon "outraged descriptions of anti-Semitic hatred while avoiding analysis or explanation of it" (p. 506). While this description might apply to Goldhagen, Lucy Dawidowicz, and Martin Gilbert—the three authors specifically cited by Lindemann in this connection—it most certainly does not apply to many

scholars, such as Raul Hilberg, whose work has been most influential in the field.

As Lindemann himself points out (p. 15), the great Jewish historian Salo Wittmayer Baron long ago warned against collapsing into a "lachrymose conception of Jewish history." Baron's admonition has been taken to heart by many practitioners of Jewish history and historians of antisemitism. Lindemann should recognize this, as he relies on the work of many of these scholars to contravene the ostensibly dominant *Leidensgeschichte*. To cite one example: "The belief that Jews could not own land," Lindemann asserts (p. 63), "ranks as one of the most often heard oversimplifications about their status, both in Russia and elsewhere in Europe." To set the record straight he refers the reader to a provision for Jewish ownership of land contained in the "Statutes Concerning the Organization of the Jews" issued by Tsar Alexander I in 1804, as reprinted in a widely used collection of documents edited by two major figures in the field of Jewish history.<sup>[3]</sup> Howard M. Sachar's widely used basic text also notes the possibility of Jewish land ownership.<sup>(4)</sup> If there is a commonly held misconception about the ability of Jews to own land (under certain circumstances), it does not seem to be the fault of mainline Jewish historiography. Certainly over the centuries there were a great many legal and cultural constraints upon Jewish land ownership, and it would not be unfair to assert that in many societies such ownership was made extremely difficult or was systematically discouraged. But Lindemann places less emphasis on such nuances than he does on magnifying the severity of the (ostensible) errors he wishes to correct.

In the same section on Tsarist Russia, Lindemann takes exception to "the charge that the Tsarist authorities actually engaged in a concerted plan, or plot, to foment" the pogroms of 1881, a belief held "by many Jews at the time and supported since then by many historians," most notably Simon Dubnov and David Vital (p. 67). In

support of the contrary position Lindemann cites an article published in 1980 by I. Michael Aronson. Lindemann seems unaware that Aronson had since expanded on his conclusions in a book length monograph,[5] or that a piece by Aronson appeared in the important recent anthology about pogroms edited by Klier and Lambroza.[6] The problem here is Lindemann's insistence that Dubnov and Vital represent the mainstream position while Aronson, supposedly, does not. Time and again, Lindemann constructs a supposed consensus position, then, seemingly unaware of the contradiction, uses the work of mainline scholars to challenge it.

Lindemann can hardly be faulted for not having read every published study on antisemitism. Nonetheless, he has missed several exceedingly important recent works of scholarship, several no more recent than Goldhagen, which bear directly on many aspects of his argument. In view of Lindemann's assertion that the religious element of antisemitism has been overstated, it would have been useful to consider the implications of Elaine Pagels' conclusions about anti-Judaism in the New Testament.[7] Robert Chazan's and Kenneth Stow's highly nuanced studies on the middle ages might have led Lindemann to rethink his characterization of Jewish historiography.[8] Similarly, John Efron's excellent book on Jewish race theorists might have helped Lindemann better illuminate Disraeli's writings on the "Jewish race." [9] (While missing Efron, Lindemann suggests that Jewish historiography has avoided this embarrassing aspect of Disraeli's career, pointing only to George Mosse's *Toward the Final Solution*, a study now almost twenty years old.) The contention that Wilhelm II's antisemitism before World War I had been merely "hesitant" (p. 424) could well have been tested by consulting the masterful biography of the Kaiser by Lamar Cecil.[10] Doris Bergen's recent book on the German Christian movement in the Third Reich might have forced Lindemann to question whether the anti-Jewish legacy of

Lutheranism in Germany might have been somewhat stronger than he realized.[11]

Lindemann's assertion that Jewish characteristics and conduct help to explain Gentile antisemitism may well prove to be the most controversial aspect of his book. The argument is not a new one--it was featured prominently, for example, in Bernard Lazare's study of antisemitism, which appeared in France, during the Dreyfus affair, in 1894.[12] Lazare, a French Jew (and defender of Dreyfus) was parroting the sentiments not merely of many Gentiles, but also of more than a few modern, assimilated, western and central European Jews, for whom reform of Jewish society and religion was a pressing issue. Among the sources of antisemitism, Lazare pointed to superstition and obscurantism, especially among traditional *Ostjuden*, a Jewish "solicitude for worldly goods" and "love for gold," "exclusiveness," "persistent patriotism," and "pride of Israel" (Lazare, pp. 17-18). However, Lazare did not attribute the existence of antisemitism exclusively to Jewish behaviors: "The Jew is only one of the factors of antisemitism; he provokes it by his presence, but he is not the only one that determines it" (Lazare, p. 18). Lazare also pointed to Christianity, nationalism, and the social dislocations of economic modernization as important sources of antisemitism.

Lindemann posits an argument whose main contours are similar to Lazare's. But there is a very major difference as well. Whereas Lazare was clearly disapproving of what he saw as Jewish characteristics and behaviors, Lindemann's main concern is not to judge the Jews, but to show how their conduct was perceived by Gentiles at the time. Lindemann, despite some unnecessarily provocative rhetoric, does not mean to justify antisemitic interpretations of Jewish characteristics, but rather to demonstrate the subjective plausibility of such interpretations to Europeans in specific times and places.

Instances of condemnation of Jews by other Jews is an important component of Lindemann's argument. They help illuminate the context in which corresponding antisemitic perceptions among Gentiles were formed, and, moreover, help establish a modicum of veracity for some of these perceptions. Lindemann cites Lazare only once (p. 210) in this way, but other Jewish critics are quoted frequently. The Jewish sources Lindemann uses in this manner fall into two basic categories: Modernizing reformers who sought to address insularity, obscurantism, and corruption among traditional Jews; and Zionists, who emphasized the inevitably degrading effects of Diaspora life on Jewish ethno-national characteristics. Thus, for example, in explaining that "antisemitic conclusions were frequently drawn from the prominent participation of Jews in the liquor trade, saloons, usury, prostitution, smuggling, and racketeering," Lindemann points out that "Jewish reformers did not deny the existence or extent of Jewish criminality but rather emphasized how much the environment in Eastern Europe encouraged criminality" (p. 66). Similarly, Lindemann notes that "many Zionists have considered Jews in the Diaspora to be 'objectively detestable'; their obnoxious characters, deformed by their powerless and precarious existence among Gentiles, are the reason they have been hate" (p. xviii).

Much as Lindemann's view of *Leidensgeschichte* is skewed by a caricature of Jewish historiography, his presentation of Jewish reformers and Zionists suffers from oversimplification. To be sure, there was no shortage of rhetoric within these movements that was critical of the condition of the Jewish people. But the discourses of reform and Zionism were extremely complex. Jewish reformers did not necessarily accept the argument that Gentile persecution produced Jewish conduct that was problematic, even when it was put forth by Gentiles who were sympathetic to Jewish "betterment" through emancipation.[13] The bipolarity between Ostjuden and German-Jewish Yekkes is also subject to some misunder-

standing. By the early twentieth century some German-Jewish intellectuals had come to admire Ostjuden as exemplars of "authentic" Judaism (as Michael Brenner demonstrates in his splendid new book.)[14] Similarly, most Zionists hardly regarded Diaspora Jews as despicable. Jews in Western and Central Europe resisted the logic of Zionism for a long time, and Jews in those regions who did adhere to the movement reconciled their Zionism to their German, French, or British citizenship. (Michael Berkowitz's study of Zionism in west-central Europe before 1914 would have been helpful to Lindemann in this regard.)[15] Lindemann is probably correct in pointing out that antisemites sought and found succor in the rhetoric of some reformers and some Zionists. But Lindemann's broader conclusion--that the discourse within the Jewish world enhanced the plausibility of certain antisemitic prejudices--remains problematic. If antisemites were ready and willing to take note of Jewish self-criticism, why were they not also prepared to embrace positive self-assessments by Jews? More generally, if antisemites were so ready to condemn instances of corruption or criminality among Jews, why were they so unwilling to give credit where credit was due for Jewish contributions to the sciences, the arts, and economic modernization? Why did they always use the term "Jewification" derisively?

For modern antisemites, the actual presence of Jews has been a sufficient, but not necessary, condition for prejudice. Most scholars have recognized that the presence, characteristics, and behavior of Jews has had an impact on the shape and rhetoric of antisemitism in places where Jews have lived. Professor Lindemann's book, if for no other reason than because it will stimulate discussion, may contribute to our understanding of the processes that shape antisemitism under diverse circumstances. But antisemites who have actually encountered Jews have responded to the "reality" of Jewish conduct in a selective manner that has consistently confirmed their worst expectations; moreover antisemitic beliefs about Jews have

managed to take root in places such as Saudi Arabia and Japan, in which few or no Jews actually live. Although reality has seeped in through the cracks from time to time, antisemitism has operated primarily in the realm of fantasy.

Notes:

[1]. *The Jew Accused : Three Anti-Semitic Affairs* (Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank), 1894-1915 (Cambridge, 1991).

[2]. These would include Raul Hilberg, Steven Aschheim, Omer Bartov, Yehuda Bauer, and Fritz Stern.

[3]. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World*. (2nd ed. New York, 1995), pp. 375-77. Lindemann actually cites the first edition (1980), pp. 303-05.

[4]. Howard M. Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History*. (rev. ed. New York, 1990), pp. 76-78.

[5]. I. Michael Aronson, *Troubled Waters: The Origins of the 1881 Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Russia* (Pittsburgh, 1991).

[6]. John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza, eds. *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge, 1992).

[7]. Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York, 1995).

[8]. Robert Chazan, *In the Year 1096 : the First Crusade and the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1996); *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Antisemitism* (Berkeley, 1997); Kenneth Stow, *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Cambridge, MA., 1992).

[9]. John Efron, *Defenders of the Race : Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siecle Europe* (New Haven, 1994).

[10]. Lamar Cecil, *Wilhelm II*. 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, 1989, 1996).

[11]. Doris Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill, 1996)

[12]. Bernard Lazare, *Antisemitism: Its History and Causes* (Reprint: Lincoln, 1995).

[13]. See, for example, Moses Mendelssohn's response to Dohm, in *Mendes-Flohr Reinharz, The Jew in the Modern World*. pp. 44-47.

[14]. Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven, 1996).

[15]. Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry before the First World War* (Cambridge, 1993); *Western Jewry and the Zionist Project, 1914-1933* (Cambridge, 1997).

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