

Anti-Semitism by Dan Cohn-Sherbok.  
Sutton Publishing 2002, £20.

You need to have a strong stomach and real determination to read this book, the latest of Dan Cohn-Sherbok's impressively large literary output.

Cohn-Sherbok traces the story of anti-Jewish hatred from the origins that he debatably places in ancient Egypt, through every age and every country in which Jews have lived. A great deal of the later material is only fully comprehensible in the light of the beginnings of Christian anti-Semitism, described in impressive detail, as the pattern that was set many centuries ago has been perpetuated ever after, occasionally enhanced by extremes of violence, but otherwise remaining essentially unchanged.

So why a strong stomach? Because no matter how objectively Jewish readers approach this book they will find the unremitting hatred, the vitriol, the enmity, the twisting of truth and perverting of facts that fill its pages deeply distressing. They will also wonder how the faith that proclaims its adherence to a God of Love could so comprehensively have betrayed that faith in its treatment of the people from whom their god emerged.

Cohn-Sherbok is at his most fascinating when he turns his attention to the Emancipation period and afterwards, showing time and again how Jews were always on the wrong side of their fellow citizens, whether society was more or less tolerant and open.

In the final chapters the author focuses on modern post-war anti-Semitism and that now so rife in Arab countries. The ferocity of that described in the last chapter is immensely worrying and full of foreboding for the future of the State of Israel and certainly left this reviewer with a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach.

In the chapter on Jewish Emancipation Cohn-Sherbok quotes a 19<sup>th</sup> century German Jew, Gabriel Riesser, who wrote: Believe me, hate like the angel of death can find its man, it can recognize him by whatever name he calls himself.

The message of this excellent popular book is that there is no escape from anti-Semitism, whoever you are, whatever you become; reading the text is a somewhat masochistic exercise, but the detail in the pages draws you in regardless. Cohn-Sherbok is to be commended for this timely piece of work.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh