

Call for Papers:

Experiences of Violence and Notions of Temporality in Jewish History

The Department of History at the University of Hamburg and the Institute for the History of the German Jews (IGdJ) invite proposals for the international conference “Experiences of Violence and Notions of Temporality in Jewish History.” The conference will take place at Warburg-Haus, Hamburg on March 27-29, 2023.

Experiences of violence have a great impact on Jewish life and Jewish thinking from biblical times onward. In an interdisciplinary conference we aim to discuss these various collective experiences of violence in Jewish history with a special focus on temporality. One key theme to be explored are modes of anticipating violence and the various actions that result from this anticipation. The processing and the interpretations of experiences of violence are a second important theme.

Our basic assumption is that anti-Jewish violence was and is still interpreted through three main temporal prisms. Traditionally, experiences of violence were viewed by Jews as continuing or reflecting the biblical narrative of gentile hostility toward Jews. This line of interpretation often contains an eschatological concept of apocalypse and salvation. In contrast to this cyclic notion of events, the ideological secular movements of the late 19th century, Zionism and Socialism, offered their own notions of time; Zionists or Bundists no longer wanted to wait for the Messiah, but to take their fate into their own hands, following the militant tradition of the Maccabees. These ideologies viewed episodes of violence against Jews as part of a linear process that should end by establishing their envisioned utopias: A Jewish homeland or a new socialist order. Under this temporal prism, both the anticipation and commemoration of such events are meant to justify the ideological cause. The third prism discussed here, which seems to keep increasing over time and even receive a sacralized status, is that of the Holocaust as a cataclysm dominating the discussion on prior and future events of violence against Jews.

We would like to address temporal aspects of violence in Jewish context, such as:

Times of violence: predictable time frames for violence or times of abstinence from violence, for instance outset of a war, state of anarchy, religious holidays (Passover/Easter).

Rhythm and duration: abruptness, repetitiveness (waves of violence), escalation, (un)simultaneity, synchronicity, suppression of the violence, aftermath (destruction, deterrence, post-trauma).

Time as (means of) Violence: Extending the anticipation as in the case of siege or a given threat as a weapon used for demoralization, intimidation, and driving wedges between Jewish and non-Jewish neighbors.

Anticipation as a time for action: Passive and active tactics of waiting for violence, time span between the present and the predicted violence, asymmetrical temporalities of targets of violence and its agents.

Temporalities of remembering: Narrating violence in a religious and national context, commemorative culture, classification of violent episodes in wider historical context, backshadowing.

At the conference we want to discuss the following questions relating to “Experiences of Violence and Notions of Temporality in Jewish History”:

- How did class, age, gender, ideology, or religiosity/secularization influence experiences of violence and temporality?
- Methodological approaches: how can temporality be investigated in historical sources and be conceptualized as an analytical category with historiographical value?
- How were secular and religious times being dealt with in the context of violence and what was the impact of living in multiple time regimes?
- What impact did experiences of violence have on Jewish understandings of time and temporal practices (calendars, superimposition of new commemorative events on existing holidays)? How were these experiences interpreted in eschatological terms or analogies to biblical events?
- What changes occurred in understandings of time and practices of commemoration and memory of violence between the pre-modern and modern ages, especially during the 18th to 20th centuries?
- How did Jewish communities in different historical, political, and cultural contexts transform experiences of violence into strategies of anticipation? How did they translate anticipation into action such as lobbying, bargaining, bribes, hiding, conversion, assuming non-Jewish identity, escape, defensive preparations, and counter-violence? Was the time of anticipation seen as part of the violence itself or as an opportunity to mitigate it?
- What kind of poetics and strategies of waiting and other temporal elements of violence were devised in diaries, commemorative books and testimonies ?

Scholars at any stage of their career, who are interested to participate in the conference, are invited to submit a short abstract (300 words max.) and a short biographical note (150 words max.) to Prof. Dr. Monica Rüthers (monica.ruethers@uni-hamburg.de), Dr. Kim Wünschmann (kim.wuenschmann@igdj-hh.de), and Ilay Halpern, M.A. (ilay.halpern@uni-hamburg.de) **until August 31, 2022.**

The conference is organized as part of the Work Package “Before the Pogrom: Anticipated Violence in Modern Jewish History” within [“GewaltZeiten/Times of Violence. Temporality in Violent Undertakings”](#), a research unit funded by the Federal Research Program of the City of Hamburg (LFF) in which researchers from the University of Hamburg, the Institute for the History of the German Jews, and the Helmut Schmidt University of the Bundeswehr cooperate.

The organizers aim to secure funding to defray the travel and accommodation expenses of participants.