

Ruth Wisse: I'm always fearful of what I call the politics of grievance and blame. I know it best from the perspective of anti-Semitism; it's something that I have paid attention to over many years. And I think that anti-Semitism is at root, a politics of grievance and blame that organizes politics against the Jews as the explanation of everything that is going wrong, and as the scapegoat for everything that is going wrong. So it's a question of grievance. 'Are you unemployed? Well of course you're unemployed because they are taking your jobs. Are you miserable? Of course, because they are superior to you and they pretend to be superior to you and they take away your rights and they steal your opportunities from you. And this is a very potent feature of modern democratic politics that as soon as you have to win the electorate, as soon as you have to win over a public, how are you going to appeal to them, on what grounds? So we hear a lot about 'let's take the high road, let's go with the arguments of what is better for you', but those don't work as well as the low road of grievance and blame. The moment that a society or any part of a society really begins to resort to this politics of grievance and blame, one is in great danger. Now I think that it's almost inevitable to do that kind of politicking in our system of government where you're trying to win over the allegiance of an electorate but it depends at whom the finger is pointed and it also depends on how vigorous this is and how violent it becomes in its language even before it becomes violence in the streets. And I'm always worried when this is fueled in any kind of movement, so the alternative to that is a politics of self-accountability, what are you going to do for yourself, how are you going to solve your problems or what are we going to do together so that we can make sure that this problem that we all identify as a problem can really be solved without the idea of blaming somebody else for it.