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Courtesy of Yaniv Cohen

### Life

## This Israeli bachelor found community and love by hosting huge Shabbat dinners

By Ayala Or-El

Hosting any Shabbat dinner is an achievement. There are guests to be invited. A menu to plan. Food to buy, and cook. A table to set. A house to clean, before and after. And most of this happens over the course of a busy work week.

It's a lot of work, which means what Yaniv Cohen does every Friday night in Los Angeles is more on the order of a triumph. He hosts about 100 people – sometimes more – some of whom stay the night to go to synagogue with him the next morning. He spends \$1,000. He finishes cleaning up at 3 a.m.

"I'm going on overdraft often," he said. "But it's worth it. I'm not worried. God will provide."

Cohen, 37, has been undertaking most of this monumental effort every week since 2016 because he loves the ritual and pleasures of Friday night dinner. But he also had an ulterior motive. He wanted to find a soul mate.

Originally from Haifa, Israel, Cohen immigrated to the United States in 2004 because he wanted to help support his mother, a widow, and thought he

would find greater economic opportunity in the U.S. He lived first in Maryland, where he learned about the beauty of Friday night dinner from a friend. Then, he moved around for a while in search of the perfect city to settle in. About eight years ago, he decided to move to Los Angeles, known for its sunny skies year round. There, he built an air duct and carpet-cleaning business, and he has made good on his goal of supporting his mother, but he was lonely.

"I rented a guest house and although I was invited to Friday dinners, I came back to an empty and dark home," he told the Forward. That was when he decided to buy a house so that he would be able to host guests himself.

When he'd saved enough money for a down payment, Cohen purchased his 2,700 square-foot home in North Hollywood and started inviting guests over. Most of them were complete strangers, but many became regulars.

"At first, I was hesitant to go to Yaniv's house

because I didn't know anyone there, but Yaniv immediately made me feel welcome and at home," said Natalie Levy, whose family lives in Israel. "I found a community there and good friends."

Cohen was bold in his quest for a Jewish community. If he was out and about and heard a hint of Hebrew, he would immediately approach the speaker to extend an invitation to Shabbat dinner.

"I found them everywhere, at the mall, at Costco, at the kosher market," he said.

He also rounded out the guest list by trying to make sure recently arrived Israelis knew that they had a place at his table. He started advertising on social media, especially Facebook. This turned out to be a very smart move.

Cohen serves his guests what Israelis call "salads" – appetizers like baba ganoush, tahini, chopped vegetables, eggplant in tomato sauce, hummus. There's also vegetable soup, Moroccan-style salmon, rice, chicken and burekas. The salmon is always a big hit – find the recipe here.

Cohen serves as chef, host and cleaning crew, although he does have a friend who helps him make a Shabbat lunch of cholent, the meat stew that's traditionally made before sundown on Friday and kept warm through the day of rest.

If his guests are traditionally observant, and don't travel on Shabbat, he invites them to stay for the night on bunk beds or a sofa bed, or in his recreational vehicle.

The next morning, Cohen and his overnight guests get up at 8 a.m. and walk to services at Adat Yeshurun Valley Sephardic Congregation in North Hollywood. Guests who don't wish to accompany him to services can stay at his home and join him for cholent at around noon.

"I didn't have anywhere to go on Saturdays until I arrived at Yaniv's place. I feel like I'd found a family," said Ruby Meir, a regular guest.

After four years, Cohen was having a great time. He even started having holiday dinners – Rosh

Hashannah and Passover, which attract 200 guests – for which he would set up long tables in his backyard. But he still wanted to find a wife, preferably an Israeli like him. He watched others around his dinner tables find love – one couple is getting married in July – and kept searching for himself.

"It's amazing how many connections were made between total strangers at my place, not only love connections. People found jobs, apartments for rent, playdates for their children," he said.

And then one Friday evening in September, 2018, Sapir Elady, an Israeli architect whose father lives in L.A., walked through his door. Cohen greeted her like he does all his guests, with a warm hug and a big smile, but deep down he knew: This guest was different.



Elady learned about Cohen and his Shabbat dinners three weeks after she had arrived in L.A., by joining an Israeli Facebook page: "I told my sister who lives here, 'Let's go.'"

Elady, 26, was impressed by Cohen's generosity. After the third dinner, he asked her out on a date.

They dated for a year, and then Cohen proposed at a Hanukkah party at an L.A. club. After the lighting of the menorah, he went on stage and called Elady to join him.

Cohen bent down on one knee and asked Sapir to marry him in front of 1,000 people. Dozens of cell phones went up in the air to document the moment.

The wedding will happen on March 26th, and the guest list already includes 500 names – and counting.

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*Ayala Or-El is Yedioth Ahronoth writer in Los Angeles and the Editor-in-chief of the Israeli magazine We are in America.*

# The monumental effort of translating 'Harry Potter' into Yiddish

By Jordan Kutzik

This article originally appeared in the Yiddish Forverts.

When Arun Viswanath, the Yiddish translator of J. K. Rowling's worldwide bestseller "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" was 12 years old, he suddenly had a revelation that made him feel dejected. Although he's a grandson of the venerable Yiddish linguist Mordkhe Schaechter and the son of the Yiddish poet Gitl Schaechter-Viswanath, and spoke the language with his extended family, including a dozen cousins his age, he had opened a Yiddish storybook only to realize that he didn't recognize many of the words.

"That really frightened me, it depressed me," Viswanath, known as Arele to his Yiddish-speaking friends, told the Forverts. "Ever since then I've felt a lot of pressure to speak Yiddish well. I began reading a lot more Yiddish and making flashcards of words I didn't know."

Around the same time, Viswanath, like hundreds of millions of kids around the world, read the first volume of the Harry Potter series. "To tell you the truth, it didn't really grab my attention. I read it and that was that. I would never have imagined that the book would become a big part of my life."

Viswanath continued working to improve his knowledge of Yiddish. He read widely in the language, studied the intricacies of different dialects and strove to reduce the influence of English phraseology on his Yiddish. Among his Yiddish-speaking friends and family he gained a reputation as someone to consult whenever they had a question about an obscure Yiddish phrase or needed to translate something into an idiomatic Yiddish. He wanted to help Yiddish speakers improve their knowledge of the language, but he didn't know where to begin.

In October 2017 his wife, Tali Adler, a "Harry Potter" super fan, suggested that he translate the first book of the series into Yiddish.

"Do you really want to raise Yiddish-speaking kids in a

world without Harry Potter in Yiddish?" she asked.

Viswanath liked the idea in principle, but wasn't sure if he was up to the task. Despite knowing the language better than almost anyone his age – he was 26 at the time – he felt that his abilities were no match for his late grandparents who had been surrounded by native Yiddish speakers in the United States, not to mention his great grandparents in Eastern Europe who spoke it when millions of Jews used the language as their daily vernacular.

Furthermore, Harry Potter poses a famously difficult task for translators. Rowling's world of magicians, dragons, spells and flying broomsticks weaves together Germanic folklore of the supernatural with hundreds of references to British cuisine and boarding school culture.

Besides her prodigious skill at creating fantastical worlds and writing plot twists that keep young readers turning the pages, Rowling is also a gifted philologist whose knowledge of Latin, French and Old English adds great depth to her work. The names of many of her characters are crafted in such a way as to evoke in the reader a nearly subconscious understanding of the character's nature. The same goes for the names of forests, streets and shops as well as the terms for numerous animals, plants and magical objects of Rowling's invention. To have any hope of competently translating all of this, a translator needs to understand the linguistic elements that Rowling welded together and then find equivalents that create the same effect in the target language.

It's such a tall order that several articles in academic journals of philology, linguistics and translation studies have explored the different approaches translators have taken in rendering Harry Potter into other languages.

After consulting with several Yiddish experts, Viswanath took on the challenge. He organized an informal advisory committee to consult with on matters of stylistics and translating Rowling's magical terminology. He also recruited translation editors, chief among them the linguist Yaakov Blum and Viswanath's mother Gitl Schaechter-Viswanath.

Setting down to work, Viswanath created a glossary of hundreds of specialized terms. He tracked down words and terms associated with magic, British foods, boarding school life [prefect, head boy, etc.] and dozens of rare plants, which most Americans couldn't identify in English, let alone Yiddish.

"In order to get to the bottom of what Rowling means

with a certain term you have to read all seven books,” Viswanath said. “With mythological and magical creatures you have to understand what its most important characteristics are. A *kobold* – a mythical creature in German and Yiddish folklore – “is not the same as a goblin; and one goblin can be very different from another. Only then can you turn to Yiddish sources and try to find something that matches.”

Several examples shed light on Viswanath’s approach to translation. For the student houses at Hogwarts, Viswanath translated some of their names literally, while others were transliterated. Gryffindor becomes *Goldngrif*: The “gryff” in the English original refers to the griffin, a mythological creature that is part lion and part eagle, which Viswanath kept in his translation – in Yiddish it means “vulture” rather than griffin – while translating *dor*, which means “of gold” in French. Similarly he translated the house name Ravenclaw as *Robnkrel*. While there are several Yiddish words for raven and claw, *Robnkrel* is the only combination that approximates the sound and rhythm of the original. For Hufflepuff, which has no discernible etymological meaning, he chose to keep the name as is.

Character names presented a similar tension between translating literally and maintaining the sound and rhythm of the original. Viswanath translated the alliterative name Emeric the Evil as *Emrikh der Umerlekher* (literally: “Emeric the dishonest”) and the Elfric the Eager as “*Elfrikh der Eyferikher*” (Literally: “Elfric the Passionate/Jealous”).



Arun Viswanath

As far as plants, a key aspect of Rowling’s imagined world, Viswanath sought out equivalents for dozens of obscure trees, shrubs, roots and types of moss that are used in magical potions or that appear in the book’s many colorful place names. As millions of children know, Harry Potter lives on Privet Drive. But few readers know that a privet is a type of shrub frequently used in hedges. The Yiddish word for privet is *liguster*. So in the Yiddish version Harry Potter lives on *liguster gas*.

Wolf’s bane, a flower that has been used for centuries

to create both medicine and poisons, appears frequently in the potions that students at Hogwarts brew. The traditional Yiddish term, *velfisher sam* – literally “wolf’s poison” – appears in Viswanath’s translation. But Viswanath used a different strategy for rendering devil’s snare, a hallucinogenic plant long associated with witchcraft in Europe and voodoo in Haiti, into Yiddish. Although there is an equivalent Yiddish term for the plant listed in some dictionaries, it’s obscure. So Viswanath chose to literally translate the English name into Yiddish as *tayvl-pastke* (“devil-trap”) to evoke the same feeling in the reader as the English original.

To find equivalents for magical and mythological creatures Viswanath consulted several Yiddish works on the topic alongside dictionaries and articles in folklore journals. Some mythological creatures, such as *karlikn* [dwarves], *volkelakn* [werewolves], *vampirn* [vampires] and *eynherner* [unicorns] have exact native equivalents in Yiddish. For those such as trolls, zombies, banshees and ogres, which are the same in most languages, Viswanath opted to transliterate the English words. And he took some mythological creatures from Yiddish folklore, like ghosts and demons, and relocated them in Rowling’s magical England: hag becomes *koldunye*, which, like its English equivalent, is an old-fashioned term for a witch. Ghoul, a demon from Arabic folklore that feeds on fresh corpses, becomes *lantekh*, a cross between a goblin and a poltergeist in Yiddish folklore.

Viswanath’s deep knowledge of lexicography and philology comes across in his translations of the fictional coins used in Rowling’s wizarding world. The smallest coin used in the series is called a “*knut*,” which in Yiddish is rendered as a *niksl*. Why? Viswanath believes that “*knut*” is a play on words. If the “k” is silent, it would be pronounced like “not,” which makes sense considering that it is the wizarding equivalent of a penny, and therefore nearly worthless. In medieval Yiddish *niks* means “not,” and a “*niksl*,” its diminutive, means roughly a “trifle.” Additionally, assuming the “k” is indeed silent, both words are near homophones with their language’s words are near homophones with their language’s respective equivalents for “nut” – in Yiddish: *nisl* – a food long

associated with coins of small valuations.

Finding Yiddish equivalents for invented or obscure words was, however, not Viswanath's hardest task in translating "Harry Potter." Although he wanted the Yiddish text to read naturally, he had to tread a fine line between using folksy Yiddish terms and overly Judaizing the world of Harry Potter on the other. Unlike some recent translations of American, British and German literature into Yiddish, Viswanath chose not to change any of the Christian elements in the text. Harry Potter and his friends still celebrate Christmas and Easter, and it's clear from reading the Yiddish text that in the book, both wizards and non-wizards alike aren't Jewish.

"I wanted to present the text in Yiddish, not change who the characters are," Viswanath explained.

But how should a British, presumably Christian wizard sound in Yiddish? Because many of Rowling's characters speak in thick regional English dialects, Viswanath used his knowledge of Yiddish dialects to mimic the variations in speech.

"I tried to transpose the wizarding world onto a map of the Yiddish-speaking world" – pre World War II – "without making the characters Jewish. Filch speaks in a thick Lithuanian Yiddish accent and doesn't pronounce the 'sh' sound, so he says sabes instead of *shabes*, and Hagrid, who despises him and speaks a very distinct rural English, speaks in a thick, almost exaggerated Polish Yiddish. I thought this was a good approach because it helps show the tension between them. As for Snape and McGonagall, well, they're Litvaks. They just are." Like a rabbi, Dumbledore uses many words of Hebrew and Aramaic origin in his speech. "Not because he's Jewish," Viswanath added, "but because he's learned."

After more than two years of hard work Viswanath hopes that a diverse group of Yiddish readers and language students will enjoy his translation and use it to improve their knowledge of the language. He's already begun translating the second volume of "Harry Potter", with the Yiddish title "*Heri Poter un di soydes-kamer*."

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*Jordan Kutzik is a staff writer at the Forverts.*

## News

# 'Rabbi' gift card scam spurred congregants to spend thousands

By Ari Feldman

The gift card email scam targeting American rabbis and synagogues has reached communities from New York to Hawaii, with some incidents of congregants falling for the scheme.

Three members of a Conservative synagogue in Virginia responded to emails they thought were from their rabbi by buying a collective \$2,500 worth of gift cards. So far, two of the three have been able to get the gift cards cancelled and their money returned.

In Idaho, a woman nearly lost \$400 in gift cards to the scam. But just as she was about to take pictures of the cards' codes to send to the "rabbi's" email address, a cashier realized what she was doing, and stopped her.

Even a Forward staffer received an email that appeared to be part of the scam, after someone purporting to be the rabbi of an Arkansas synagogue emailed him asking for eBay gift cards "for some women going through cancer at the hospital." The email was sent, suspiciously, on Saturday morning.

Jewish clergy and their congregants are just the latest to be targeted by this kind of email scam, which has previously affected other clergy and businesses in various sectors. The "rabbis" tell victims to buy gift cards and send pictures of them, so that they can use the codes on the back. The scammer can then use the codes to purchase anything they want from that particular store or website.

While the extent of the scam is not clear, several dozen synagogues were targeted in the most recent wave of the attack last week, according to Michael Masters, the head of the Secure Community Network, a not-for-profit that focuses on protecting American Jewish institutions.

Masters said that the group is coordinating with law enforcement agencies, including the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security, to investigate the

scam. A representative for the FBI did not immediately respond to an emailed list of questions.

Little is known about the scam's origins so far, though it appears to be coming from overseas, security experts told the Forward.

"The way that they are approaching it does become a typical gift card scam. But the social engineering up front is more important to the story," said Larry Altenburg, a security consultant and the senior vice president of Agudas Achim Congregation in Alexandria, Virginia, where they know of three congregants who fell for the scam. "It's not just the rabbi, it's also our lay leadership – our congregation president has been impersonated."

The scam largely appears to have been done in a low-tech fashion. In most incidents, the scammer – or scammers – creates one or several fake email addresses for a synagogue rabbi or leader, and sends emails requesting gift cards to addresses publicly available on the synagogue website.

But it's possible that scammers may have also done some limiting hacking of email lists. In instances with both Agudas Achim and the Wood River Jewish Community in Sun Valley, Idaho, some of the emails targeted were apparently not available online. Rabbi Robbi Sherwin of Wood River said that the scammers sent emails to members of her interfaith coalition in Sun Valley – clergy who are not affiliated with her synagogue.

What is confusing – and what may have convinced some congregants that the requests for gift cards were real – is that the emails have the full name of their rabbi as the sender, including a picture of the rabbi as their Gmail avatar. Without a recipient clicking for more information on the sender, the emails would appear to come directly from the congregants' rabbi.

The emails have followed a particular script: Most of the subject lines are "Shalom Aleichem," a Hebrew phrase that means "peace be with you," but one that is not normally used as an informal greeting. The scammer then signs off with "Blessings" or

"L'Shalom," which means "to peace," and is sometimes used as a salutation in emails or letters.

In Sun Valley, crisis was averted by a cashier who had encountered the scam before, Sherwin said. The congregant sold her eBay gift cards to a friend who uses the auction website and repaid her with cash.

Sherwin did not identify the congregant, hoping to protect her privacy, but she said that the congregant was not an elderly person or someone unfamiliar with the darker forces of the internet. The two had recently been corresponding to plan a holiday program, and Sherwin said the scammers successfully exploited her role as a fundraiser and charity collector in their small community.

Asking for gift cards "sounds exactly like something I would do," she said, adding that the email was "almost written in a way that I would compassionately ask for help."

"Hackers and scammers have come a long way since the Nigerian princes," she said.

Community organizations have been responding with email blasts to local synagogues, urging people to be wary of unusual emails from their rabbis.

Robert Wilson, the chief security officer for the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ, said that the Federation is available to conduct cybersecurity trainings for synagogue staffs in their region. In an email he sent last week about the scams, he directed people to an overview of the scams by the Secure Communities Network.

The overview includes several best practices for avoiding such scams. Double-check that the message is coming from the synagogue's actual account, and not Gmail. Confirm unusual requests for money by using a second type of communication, like a text or phone call. Make sure your online activities are secure – update your computer and password frequently, use two-factor authentication, and never send sensitive information over email.

"Cyber-hackers are attacking our government agencies," Wilson said. "So they certainly can get into

a small synagogue network if they try hard enough.”

If you have received an email that you believe is fraudulent or have information about an incident connected to this email gift card scam, you can report the incident to the Secure Communities Network by emailing [DutyDesk@securecommunitynetwork.org](mailto:DutyDesk@securecommunitynetwork.org) or calling 844.SCN.DESK

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### Culture

# Remembering Kirk Douglas – a movie legend like no other

By Neal Gabler



Kirk Douglas has passed away at the age of 103. In memory of his astounding career, we reprint this tribute to the movie legend who was born Issur Danielovich to immigrant parents.

Kirk Douglas was both a movie legend and a Hollywood anomaly: a star divided. Most stars lodge in our collective consciousness. Douglas, while a first-magnitude star, was never quite an indelible one, save maybe for the dimple in his chin, never one who seemed to capture the zeitgeist the way some of his contemporaries did. Arriving in Hollywood when it was transitioning from classical acting to the Method, he was part traditional actor, part Method. Handsome but occasionally petulant, he was both pretty boy and thug. He could be cool, but also explosive, both iceberg and volcano. And perhaps above all he was always both outsider and insider – the man who never quite fit comfortably into any peg-hole.

By now most Jews know that Douglas was born Issur Danielovich to two illiterate Russian Jewish immigrant parents, in Amsterdam, New York, not far from Albany. He grew up destitute, a “nobody,” as he later put it, and he grew up resentful. First out of survival and then out of professional necessity, he tried to hide his roots, as he edged from Issur Danielovich to Izzy Demsky and finally to Kirk Douglas, a name he chose for himself after graduating from St. Lawrence University and embarking on his acting career. He

moved to New York, got a scholarship to the American Academy of the Dramatic Arts, found himself on Broadway, and then was lured to Hollywood when a friend and fellow Jew, Lauren Bacall, who had preceded him there, passed his name to producer Hal Wallis.

From poor first-generation Eastern European Jew to Hollywood star – Douglas's was an assimilationist fairy tale. But the assimilation was never complete, which may have been a Jewish actor's occupational hazard. There wasn't much room for Jewish actors in Hollywood unless they foresook their Jewishness. Paul Muni, born Muni Weisenfreund, buried himself in make-up and other ethnic identities; it was said he answered the door in costume. Edward G. Robinson, born Emanuel Goldenberg, made his career playing Italians. Swarthy Jeff Chandler, born Ira Grossel, played Cochise in "Broken Arrow." And John Garfield, born Julius Garfinkel, affected an average American Joe.

Douglas' accommodation was one of the most unusual. His Jewishness was too stubborn to shake, even if he wanted to shake it, and in any case, he was extremely ambivalent about doing so. Virtually alone among Jewish stars, he played Jews, including a Holocaust victim in "The Juggler" and Israeli colonel Mickey Marcus in "Cast a Giant Shadow." Issur was like a second self – or, maybe, a first self. And of all the divisions that roiled in him, this seemed the most significant: the division between Issur and Kirk. It gnawed at him, haunted him, rebuked him. In his autobiography, "The Ragman's Son," he frequently recalls episodes of anti-Semitism as Issur/Izzy and others, later, as Kirk, when gentiles thought he was one of them and could talk openly about their Jew hatred. And what emerged then, in the man and in the performances, was rage – rage at his childhood poverty, rage at his shiftless father, and rage at the anti-Semitism that surrounded him and taunted him. "There was an awful lot of rage churning around inside of me," he confessed in "The Ragman's Son." Kirk Douglas was the virtuoso of rage. A lot of that was Jewish rage.

Other stars of that era, the late 1940s and 50s, brooded and seethed. It was almost de rigeur for a character to be writhing in psychological turmoil.

Montgomery Clift, James Dean, and, of course, Marlon Brando were all tortured souls – misunderstood rebels, chafing against the culture and challenging the mores and aesthetics of button-down 50s America. While they did erupt under pressure – Brando's eruptions were historic – these were always veiled *cri de coeurs* of men in anguish lashing out at their hurts and pleading for help.



And then there was Douglas. Douglas didn't convey that sense of woundedness – of a man wronged by an implacable world. Douglas was just plain angry, and his characters were closer to derangement than those of any other major star. His face was often impressionist Frank

Gorshin would imitate him, and his famously affable grin could, and often did, instantly turn into a snarl. There is a scene in William Wyler's "Detective Story" where Douglas, playing a cop on the trail of an abortionist, discovers that his beloved wife has had an abortion. The volcano erupts. "I would rather go to jail for twenty years," he yells viciously, "than to find out my wife is a tramp." It erupts again in "Lust for Life" where Douglas plays Vincent Van Gogh crossing the line into madness. It erupts in Champion where Douglas plays a hell-bent boxer who uses and discards everyone on his way to the top, and again in "Young Man With a Horn" where he turns on his mentor then descends into an alcoholic hell. Indeed, Douglas is scarcely in control of himself in many of his most famous roles.

And that is the other thing about Kirk Douglas. Though he played his share of straight arrows and men of conviction – see "Paths of Glory" or "Seven Days in May" or "Spartacus" – he specialized in unlikable characters, users and heels and no-accounts, to the point where, if no actor was ever as angry as Douglas, no actor flirted with unlikability as much as Douglas

did either. He began his film career in the noir “The Strange Love of Martha Ivers” as the titular heroine’s drunken, emasculated husband and continued down that road. Think of his ambitious down-at-the-heels reporter in Billy Wilder’s “Ace in the Hole” who manages to stage a media extravaganza out of a man trapped in a mountain cave, and prolongs the rescue to prolong the show, until the man dies. Or think of him in one of his three Academy Award nominated roles, Vincente Minnelli’s “The Bad and the Beautiful,” in which he plays a ruthless film producer who uses people as rungs on his ladder to success, and practically defines the role of snake. This was Douglas’s preference. “Virtue is not photogenic,” he once said. Villainy clearly was.

Even on those occasions when he played a relatively conventional hero, he was usually challenging authority. Again, “Paths of Glory” and “Spartacus” come to mind. The role he had always coveted – to the point of buying the rights to the book – was Randle McMurphy in Ken Kesey’s “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest,” which speaks to how well Douglas understood his persona. McMurphy was strong, iconoclastic, a bit addled, and angry – a pretty good description of Douglas’ screen image, though McMurphy had less malice than Douglas. Unfortunately, Douglas could never get the financing, so he turned the rights over to his actor/producer son Michael, who did, and who then cast Jack Nicholson because, he said, his dad was too old. Nicholson made a great McMurphy. It may be his signature role. You have a feeling, though, that Douglas would have brought more menace and heat to the character and more of that derangement.

The film in which he said it did come together for him was a modern Western, “Lonely Are the Brave,” in which he plays an itinerant ranch hand who tries to spring a friend from jail (where he is being held for having helped illegal immigrants) by getting himself incarcerated and then, when the friend won’t budge, beats up a deputy and escapes into the hills. A long pursuit ensues, pitting Douglas and his horse against the incursions of modernity. The film is an elegy for a way of life as well as a celebration of it. Douglas obviously identified with the doomed cowboy – with his rage, his loneliness, his anguish, his anti-authoritarianism and his anachronistic sense of selfhood in a conformist world. Douglas seemed to feel that way too, his stardom notwithstanding.

Douglas was always something of a lone wolf. While other stars had the security and support of the studio, even as the studio system was crumbling, Douglas preferred to be a free lancer. When the system finally fell, he was one of the first to form his own production company, Bryna, named for his mother, and along with commercial fare like *The Vikings* and *Seven Days in May*, he produced unusual projects, like *Paths of Glory* and *Lonely Are the Brave*, that were not obvious box office attractions. One of the accomplishments of which he was proudest was not something he did as an actor but as a producer when he claimed to have broken the Hollywood blacklist against suspected communists by hiring writer blacklisted Dalton Trumbo to pen “*Spartacus*” and then giving him screen credit. (Trumbo would also write “*Lonely Are the Brave*.”)

There are disputations over whether Douglas really deserves that credit. Trumbo’s family later said that Trumbo himself deserved it, and the film’s hands-on producer, Eddie Lewis, has said he was the one who got Trumbo. But the point is that Douglas did buck the authorities and did put himself on the line, even if the communist stigma had already begun to fade. It was certainly in character for him to do so, not least because so many of those blacklisted, though not Trumbo, were fellow Jews. It may be odd to say of an actor whose stage name was Scottish and who didn’t emit any apparent ethnicity, that as well as being one of the angriest stars and often one of the most unlikable, he may also have been the most Jewish of stars in the 50s and 60s before ethnicity became voguish. I think that is because just as Barbra Streisand would transform Jewish otherness into a generalized otherness for her audience, Douglas transformed Jewish resentment into a generalized resentment for his audience.

That is how we may remember him: as the man who never forgot who he was or how hard it was to maintain his identity in a society that was not receptive to it, and yet who never stopped fighting to be himself.

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*Neal Gabler’s most recent book is “Barbra Streisand”: Redefining Beauty, Femininity and Power.”*

## Opinion

# American Jews need a savior. It's not Bernie Sanders.

By Ari Hoffman

So, it could really be Bernie. Amidst the wreckage of Iowa, Sen. Bernie Sanders, the democratic socialist from Vermont, looks ensconced in the catbird seat. He is seemingly ahead in the Hawkeye popular vote, and poised for a win in New Hampshire.

Meanwhile, the ostensible front runner, Vice President Joe Biden, seems to be going in the wrong direction – a distant and dismal fourth in Iowa, and melting leads in Nevada and South Carolina. Numbers and intuition nod in agreement. The movement Sanders began in 2016 is likely to come to fruition in 2020.

Sanders has come extraordinarily far already. It isn't that nobody thought this could happen; the memories of his strong 2016 run continue to reverberate, and his core supporters have never wavered.

But proximity tends to focus the mind, and plausibility feels different in the bones than possibility. The snap second before a roller coaster plunges down the tracks is the best moment to get a good look at the landscape before things go whoosh and get blurry.

The vertigo is real. Regardless of politics, there is something remarkable about a Jewish candidate coming this far, and this close to the political Promised Land.

Add to this the excitement of a true believer who has trundled through the wilderness finding his moment and his time, however improbable; a kind comparison would be to Menachem Begin's triumph in 1977, or Benjamin Disraeli's long awaited ascension to the British premiership in 1874, opposition leaders who waited out history.

These are not things to take lightly, in this diaspora or any other. But the difficult truth is that Sanders fails this test. Begin and Disraeli were men for the ages. Sanders is the fragile prophet of the God that failed, at the head of an army that, as James Kirchick argues, should worry the Jews. That it doesn't worry Sanders is cause for even greater concern.

Shouldn't such a Jew, closer to the mountaintop than any before, uniquely situated to lead and inspire, take his responsibility a little more seriously?

For example, shouldn't he be willing to cut ties with Linda Sarsour, whose Jew-baiting has become intolerable? Shouldn't he, the leader of a movement that hangs on his every word, be able to distance himself from Rep. Rashida Tlaib of Michigan, for whom blood libels come far too easily?

Shouldn't he think twice before heaping praise on the U.K.'s Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, whose moral catastrophe of a party Sanders' most famous surrogate, Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, famously endorsed?

Shouldn't his analysis of contemporary anti-Semitism exhibit a little more complexity than the mere hope that the United Nations, which has too often been a sword seeking to injure the Jewish State, be entrusted with the task of protecting Jewish life and liberty?

Sanders professes distance from "organized religion," but speaks of his pride in being Jewish, and there is no reason to doubt the earnestness of that pride. But he stands at the head of a movement much larger than him; "not me, us," as his campaign slogan goes.

And that movement presents certain distinct dangers; of a brutal hazing that leaves skeptics battered and bruised, that is heavily intertwined with the Democratic Socialists of America, which is committed to "Palestinian liberation" and wholeheartedly supportive of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement as a weapon against "the intrinsic settler-colonialist state" of Israel.

Those with eagle eyes for the hateful excesses of some of President Trump's supporters need to check their vision when it comes to the foot soldiers of this political revolution. Sanders has raised the army, but it has also raised him. Who will be there to disband it?

Sanders' candidacy is troubling in ways that begin with a tolerance for anti-Semites but does not end there.

For starters, he dogmatically envisions nationalization of huge parts of the economy but does not honestly articulate the tradeoffs such a transformation would involve. The heady days of class warfare he proposes are unlikely to be the best of times for Jews. As I've argued before, anti-capitalism is fertile soil for hatred of Jews.

Sanders' foreign policy is of equal concern. At a time when President Trump's relationship with foreign leaders, especially of the autocratic variety, has come under rightful scrutiny, Sanders presents equally troubling associations.

His support for the Communist regime that has kept Cuba impoverished and under heel for a half century has been unrelenting. His enthusiasm for the Sandinistas and their atrocities in Nicaragua was unabashed. And in one of the great catastrophes of our age, Sanders picked the wrong

horse, backing Nicholas Maduro in his effort to burn Venezuela to the ground.

A forward glance is hardly more encouraging. One of Sanders's senior foreign policy advisers is Matt Duss, who enthusiastically believes in cutting U.S. aid to Israel, and advocates for a full American withdrawal from the Middle East. Seven years ago, while at the Center for American Progress, Duss was squarely in the middle of an uproar over pervasive anti-Semitic language on the group's website, which was so egregious as to eventually earn a rebuke from the Obama White House.

Who does the undergraduate chic allure of this kind of foreign policy appeal to? For starters, Jews on the far left, whose attraction to Sanders is undeniable. He offers the incarnation of an insurgent Jewish progressivism that keeps a hostile distance from Israel and sees loyalty to the Palestinian cause as the central form of its Jewish expression.

To be blunt, the burden of proof is on these Jews in the Sanders camp, who tolerate the toxicity of his surrogates, to show that their hostility to Israel is not mother's milk to anti-Semitism. The Jew-hatred that has erupted at the Womens March, Slut Walk, and Dyke March all suggest that the heartland of Sanders support has already been severely compromised by the oldest hatred.

Fortunately, these Jews remain a loud and self-righteous minority. The real majority are those Jews who see America and Israel as two flawed but wondrous countries underwritten by the same values. The effort to create a broad center founded on a blend between Jewish particularity and universal concern is one that remains vital. If the center does not hold, as the poet W.B. Yeats writes, "mere anarchy is loosed upon the world."

We've had enough of that recently. And wonder of wonders, for those of us gifted to live in the luckiest Diaspora in history, there's another Jewish candidate in the race.

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**The views and opinions expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Forward.**

## Opinion

# How can we trust the media when they lie about our community?

By Eli Steinberg

We're living in an age where public trust in the media is at an all-time low. Just 21% of Americans say they have "a lot of trust in the information from national news organizations."

In my community, it's probably much lower. Routinely, Orthodox and haredi Jews are forced to read news reports about us that have very little correlation to reality. A perfect example of this happened this past Tuesday, when Attorney General William P. Barr visited Borough Park for a meeting with Orthodox Jewish community leaders. It was a small meeting, just a minyan sitting around a table in a tiny room, discussing the issues. It was just Attorney General Barr, the Orthodox stakeholders, a handful of DOJ staff and several members of the media (the Forward was not among them).

I was there too. So I can tell you that the story I read about in the media was not the one that transpired in that room.

If you read most of the reporting about the event, you would think what took place was a politics-driven conversation dominated by New York's recent bail reform law and the Orthodox Jews and Trump Administration representatives devoted to crushing it. Part of this is about the fact that Barr's office has announced it will be bringing federal charges against Tiffany Harris, a woman who was arrested for targeting and slapping multiple Orthodox women, who was released without bail thanks to the new law. But mostly, it's about the fact that when it comes to the Orthodox, we just can't get a fair hearing in the media.

Take The New York Times' story, which was a perfect example of this misreporting: The Times framed the entire visit through the lens of bail reform, with a headline proclaiming Barr was "inserting himself into the bail reform fray."

And yet, in their very own story – which was entirely

about bail reform – even they had to concede that “Mr. Barr did not specifically mention bail reform” during the meeting.

That was certainly true. Not a single person in the room even brought up bail reform, and for good reason: The federal charges against Harris were not about that. They were, to quote Barr, about “lowering the level of tolerance for violence against the Jewish community” by using “the federal government to plant its flag and show zero tolerance.”

The Times, however, was not alone. Over at JTA, Ben Sales, who was in the room during the meeting, filed a brief with an opening paragraph representing Barr as “blaming the rise of anti-Semitism on what he called ‘mutant progressivism.’” Of course, Barr never said that. The actual words – which Sales ended up correcting after being called out on Twitter – were words anyone with any familiarity with the subject matter would have recognized, were “militant progressivism.”

Barr’s point, which was well taken, was that “militant progressivism” embodies a drive to reorganize society based on rationalism and animated with a passion you usually expect among religious people, casting those who oppose them as not just wrong but evil. That, Barr said, is part of the cause of the “hatreds and the antipathy” toward traditional communities such as the Orthodox. It has seeped into our politics, and is a cause of toxic tribalism – as well as the anti-Semitism some communities are now struggling with.

It was an intelligent reading of a situation we are struggling desperately to understand and contain. How ironic that it was mutated by the words of the liberal media.

But that was not the only misrepresentation in that exchange alone. If you read the news reports, Barr reportedly attempted to push back on “the idea that President Donald Trump bore any of the blame for the national rise in anti-Semitism, a notion raised by one of the participants.”

This, too, did not happen. What one participant, while bemoaning the extra difficulties he sees in our polarized moment when attempting to engage in inter-community relations, did say was that he sees “so many people [who] are eager to blame, frankly, the president on the change of tone in the country but I

think that those people have to look into themselves to see, ‘what am I doing to tone down the conversation?’”

Hardly the same thing.

The distressing thing here is that I only know all of this because I was in the room when all of this occurred. If I had not been there, I would likely have also trusted the false narrative which was being concocted by the media.

Am I really to believe things are different when I’m not in the room?

So why does this keep happening to my community? People tend to lean back on things they recognize, on things that are familiar to them, and reporters are no different. Especially when reporting about Hasidic Jews, reporters are prone to misrepresent, build connections where none exists, hear things which never happened, and make incorrect assumptions – all because of what fits the frame for the story they recognize and are most comfortable telling.

Even if it isn’t the story that happened.

But the job of the media is to tell the story that happened – even if it isn’t easy for them to tell it. And the reason so many people distrust them now is that they’ve been failing miserably at doing this.

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*Eli Steinberg lives in New Jersey with his wife and five children. They are not responsible for his opinions, which he has been putting into words over the last decade, and which have been published across Jewish and general media. You can tweet the hottest of your takes at him @HaMeturgeman.*

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## Culture

# He was the father of anti-Semitic publishing in America

By Scott D. Seligman

While I was researching a 19th century Jewish immigrant, Google, in its infinite, algorithmic wisdom, brought me to a white supremacist website with a link to a book called "The American Jew: An Exposé of His Career." The work, published in 1888, embodied anti-Semitism in its most base, rabid form: a vile portrait of dirty, deceitful, hook-nosed Hebrews swindling unwary gentiles and causing most of the world's evils.

Its author, a Greek-American named Telemachus Timayenis [1853-1918], actually wrote three works along these lines. The website hailed him as one of the first to "formulate a discourse on the Jewish Question along racial lines in the United States, rather than considerations of religious doctrine." In other words, his "contribution" was to set Americans on a path to demonizing Jews for their ethnic characteristics rather than for the murder of Christ.

Although Timayenis' works on the Jews belong in history's dustbin, they regrettably enjoy tremendous staying power. A hundred years after his death, the writer is the darling of the neo-Nazi Daily Stormer and David Duke websites, and one can download his works right along with Hitler's "Mein Kampf," Henry Ford's "The International Jew" and other iconic anti-Jewish works.

Despite his exalted position in the anti-Semitic firmament, little has been written about Timayenis. So to understand the source of his hatred and what light it might shed on the thinking of those who honor his memory, I decided to do a little digging.

## A "Well-formed Man"

Telemachus Thomas Timayenis, I learned, sailed into Boston harbor in 1871 at the age of 18. Many Greek immigrants found work in the mills and factories of Massachusetts in the late 19th century, but Timayenis was no mill hand. The son of a university professor, he was a highly educated person.

Born in Smyrna, an Aegean port in Turkey known today as Izmir, Timayenis received a classical education. With his natural talent for languages and broad knowledge of world history, he found work in Massachusetts teaching Greek and Greek history. He claimed to have taught at

Harvard, though the university has no record of him today. In 1875, he joined the Collegiate Institute, a preparatory school in Springfield, and two years later published a textbook on modern Greek.

In 1878, he relocated to New York, becoming an instructor at a popular language academy. In the summers, he headed upstate to the Chautauqua Summer College, and there we get our first physical description of him from a reporter as a "well-formed man" whose "stature is above the medium, and his large bones are well-knit into a muscular-looking frame. He has a large head and a full, dark, rosy face, covered with a black beard. His hair is dark and is combed well back from a forehead of medium height." In short, the writer concluded, he was a man who "looks indeed the noble Greek that he is."

Timayenis soon founded his own school, the New York Hellenic Institute, and published several more books, including a translation of Aesop's Fables. In its review of the work, The New York Times praised him as "inventive on his own account, and ready to carry out the thoughts of others."

It was a prescient description.

In 1881, he published his most ambitious work, a two-volume "History of Greece," but the speed at which he was churning out books raised eyebrows. This time the Times cried foul. Although Timayenis acknowledged a debt to two British historians, The Times demonstrated how massive that debt was by comparing passages from those writers with Timayenis's work, laying bare nothing less than abject plagiarism. It would not be his last instance of passing others' work off as his own.

His linguistic talents afforded him the opportunity to rub elbows with New York's rich and famous. He taught Greek and Latin to the children of Charles Scribner and Jay Gould, among other luminaries, and, for a half dozen years during the 1880s, the children, wife and sister-in-law of John D. Rockefeller.

He actually got to know the tycoon fairly well. Rockefeller once urged him to invest in oil stocks, but when they lost much of their value in 1884, he nearly went bankrupt. Pleading poverty, he asked for help. In exchange for a \$3,500 loan, he assigned the copyright to his forthcoming work, "Greece in the Time of Homer," to Rockefeller. He also obsequiously dedicated the book to him, citing "the many noble qualities that adorn his private life." Within a few years, however, their relationship would sour and he would offer the world a far less charitable take on the man.

## Writer for Hire

In 1886, Timayenis married, and with a wife to support, he

decided to offer his writing skills for hire. He received a \$7,000 advance from John McCullough, a noted Shakespearean actor, for an original play entitled “The Wife of Miletus.” But here, again, the finished work was anything but his own. Not only did he employ a co-author; the New York Tribune noticed that the play’s similarity to an earlier work for the theater. When McCullough died before it could be produced, his leading lady, actress Kate Forsyth, advanced Timayenis another \$500 for the rights. But she eventually sued for her money back when he failed to deliver them. It was the first of many court battles, nearly always about mishandling money, that Timayenis would face during his career.

For Charles Scribner & Sons, he translated Lamb’s Tales from Shakespeare into French. But working with publishers meant splitting earnings with them, and so in 1887 he decided to go into the book business for himself. Together with a partner, Emma Dickson, he established the Minerva Publishing Company. Mrs. Dickson put up \$1,500 in capital and Timayenis was to create works for the new concern to publish.

Mrs. Dickson’s husband Jimmy managed a Philadelphia theater owned by the best-known magician of his time, Professor Alexander Herrmann. A Paris-born Jew known as “Herrmann the Great,” he had performed for the crowned heads of Europe and audiences throughout the world. Herrmann, who had arrived in America in 1861, commissioned Timayenis to write a book about him.

In “A History of the Art of Magic,” Herrmann got what he paid for: a sycophantic work that sang his praises on page after page. The author was aware of his client’s Jewish origins, but the pair enjoyed a close business relationship for some time.

Minerva Press was profitable, but the audience for books about ancient Greece was limited. If Timayenis was to make publishing pay, he had to find a topic that would interest a broader readership. And with the birth of a daughter, he needed money more than ever.

### **The Original Mr. Jacobs**

It was a French author – Édouard Drumont – who inspired Timayenis to write about Jews. In 1886, Drumont had written a scathing, 1,200-page attack on French Jewry. “La France Juive” was a runaway bestseller in his native land; it sold more than 100,000

copies in its first year and enjoyed a whopping 126 printings. The most widely read book in France, it earned its popularity in no small part by naming and excoriating many living French Jews.

Drumont’s work included traditional Catholic anti-Semitic tropes such as holding Jews accountable for the murder of Jesus. But it also castigated them for racial, social and economic faults and misdeeds. Timayenis seized on these in his first anti-Semitic book, “The Original Mr. Jacobs: A Startling Exposé,” which was published anonymously by Minerva Press early in 1888.

He acknowledged his debt to Drumont for ideas in the work, but not the extent of his borrowing. In fact, whole passages were lifted directly without attribution; even typos were reproduced. But he did whittle the topic down to a more manageable 300 pages.

“This book deals with facts,” Mr. Jacobs began, but what followed was anything but factual. For fifty cents, readers were treated to a diatribe of absurd racist generalizations and name-calling that portrayed all Jews as vain, ignorant, corrupt, money-grubbing, dirty, disease-ridden and foul-smelling.

Timayenis’s Jew was a born liar, a perpetual agitator, a nihilist, a coward and a trickster. He was a usurer, a mercenary and an exploiter, inferior to the “Aryan,” with whom he was locked in perennial, elemental conflict. Throughout the book, Timayenis portrayed Jews as sworn enemies of Christian civilization, intent on ruling the world.

Lest one find oneself unable to recognize a Jew, he was ready with a handy cheat-sheet. He urged readers to note “the famous hooked nose, the restless eyes, the close-set teeth, the elongated ears, the square nails, the flat foot, the round knees, the soft hand almost melting with the hypocrisy of the traitor.” He even insisted many Jews had one arm longer than the other.

One didn’t even have to be Jewish to earn his anti-Semitic enmity. He used Mr. Jacobs to denounce Rockefeller, a gentile, despite his earlier history with the man. “If Rockefeller is not actually a Jew, he has many Jewish traits,” he asserted, adding that “the spirit of the Standard Oil Company is simply the spirit of monopoly, of cruelty, of annihilation of all

competitors,” and one that “manifests itself in the scandalous enterprises of the Jews.”

“The Original Mr. Jacobs” concluded with warnings to readers not to vote for Jews, not to permit them to immigrate, not to sympathize with them and above all, not to trust them. Because, Timayenis insisted, “the Jew was not, is not, and never will be your friend.”

His timing was auspicious. Urbanization, immigration and industrialization were causing great upheaval and social disorder, and the Russian and Eastern European Jews arriving in record numbers provided convenient targets. To the extent that these newcomers clung to old-world customs and traditional religious practices, they seemed unassimilable, and Timayenis gave voice to such concerns.

Americans, of course, had always had access to demonic portraits of Jews Europeans had been producing for centuries: think Shakespeare’s Shylock or Dickens’s Fagin. And negative imagery also pervaded not only Christian sermons and treatises, but secular literature and textbooks. From the day the first Jews set foot in New Amsterdam, they had faced religious anti-Semitism, which criticized them for their teachings and beliefs, some real – like refusing to accept the divinity of Jesus Christ – and some bogus, like using the blood of gentile children to bake matzoh.

“Mr. Jacobs” was thus hardly America’s first anti-Semitic screed. But it was different from what had come before. Timayenis is remembered for popularizing racial anti-Semitism – the notion that Jews are a distinct race or ethnic group with predictable, abhorrent and intrinsic characteristics. He is also credited, if that is the word, with ushering in professional, anti-Jewish publishing with the creation of Minerva Press and its publication of three anti-Jewish works in rapid succession.

Most reviews of “Mr. Jacobs” were scathing. The New York Sun was first with a denunciation: “Scarcely a page is free from passages revealing so malignant a hatred of this much-persecuted race that the book may be said to have no value whatever,” it noted, noting that it was “capable of doing a great deal of harm and should be shunned by all decent and self-respecting men.”

Lincoln, Nebraska’s Capital City Courier found it an “entirely unjustified attack on the people of that race.”

And the Indianapolis Journal derided its “prejudice, narrow-mindedness, illiberality and malice,” calling it “an appeal to the lowest traits of humanity.”

Members of New York’s Jewish community interceded with the Manhattan News Company, which had contracted to sell his book at its newsstands. It was an effective strategy. Only three or four hours after it went on sale, a company representative informed Timayenis that it was being removed.

“The Jews of the city had threatened through committees of bankers, merchants and societies to withdraw all of their business from the stands of his company in this city and in Newark,” Timayenis complained to the New York Press, which identified him only as a representative of Minerva Press, not as the book’s author.

He threatened to sue Manhattan News for \$5,000, though the company was not liable, having reserved the right to withdraw objectionable material. He also claimed to have received threatening letters himself and to have refused a \$25,000 offer to buy up all copies of the work. And he asked the public to come to his aid by purchasing it.

“The Jews claim this book is an attack on their nation. I deny the statement,” he asserted. “It is a history, and if it were an attack, by what right do the Jews claim exemption over other natives in this free country? They have entered into a conspiracy to ruin my business, and I intend to ... ask for the indictment of a number of leading members of that nation.”

Another Jew who found Mr. Jacobs offensive was Herrmann the magician. Shortly after it was published, he stormed the Minerva offices and – according to Timayenis – offered \$1,000 to see the author locked up. Hermann later denied this, but insisted that “any man who would write and publish such a scurrilous attack on the members of any religious faith ought to be punished. Timayenis is no good.”

For his part, the author claimed the boycott had actually boosted sales of Mr. Jacobs. At the end of the year, he boasted he had sold 200,000 copies, and that the book was in its 30th printing.

### **The American Jew: An Exposé of His Career**

A scant four months after Mr. Jacobs appeared, Timayenis produced a sequel, “The American Jew:

An Exposé of His Career.” It was to focus on the havoc Jews were supposedly wreaking at home in the U.S.

The book was also ostensibly an anonymous work, though by this time Timayenis’ authorship was known to some. It owed far less to Drumont than its predecessor, but was no less vicious. Timayenis predicted that a Jewish offensive would attempt to block its sale:

They will appoint committees to visit book-dealers, urging them not to handle the book; they will buy up and destroy all copies found exposed for sale; they will bribe, threaten, plead, and try in every possible way to interfere with its sale; they will circulate reports that the book has been “called in,” and will spread many other lies – lies that the Jew knows so well how to disseminate.

This work was a survey: of Jews on Wall Street, in the tobacco trade, in the oil industry, in politics and in journalism. It also included chapters on “the criminal Jew” and “the Jew lecher,” and chastised several famous American Jews without mentioning names, lest Timayenis be sued for libel.

He discerned no difference between newly arrived Eastern Europeans and their more established, more assimilated German-Jewish brethren. He juxtaposed a tour of the “ill-ventilated, pestilential and filthy” tenements of Manhattan’s Jewish ghetto with “the Jew at the summer hotel,” a thinly veiled reference to Joseph Seligman, a highly successful, German-born Jewish banker who had famously been turned away from the elegant Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga, New York in 1877 because of his ethnicity.

He had nothing but opprobrium for “Jewish mashers,” who he accused of “ogling, with amazing effrontery, every woman who passes them by.” He excoriated Jews who had entered politics by “skillfully twisting and changing and Anglicizing their names” to disguise their origins. And he chronicled how “metropolitan journalism sickened and deteriorated with the injection of Semitic blood into its veins,” singling out Joseph Pulitzer’s “blighting influence” while being careful not to name him.

Citing no sources, he insisted that “Jews furnish a greater number of criminals than any other foreign element in the United States” – that is, five Jewish crooks per thousand, or five times the rate for gentiles.

He commissioned caricatures to illuminate the first page of each chapter, and for that task he approached an artist who happened to be Jewish. When the man refused, Timayenis reportedly confided that he had nothing against Jews per se, and that at some point he

might even write a book “in praise of their virtues and achievements.”

“He did not hate the Jews,” the American Hebrew, a New York-based conservative Jewish weekly, confirmed. “All else having failed, he sought to make money out of blackguarding the Jews. Drumont succeeded; why not Timayenis? For money, he would have written and published a book filled to fulness with adulations eulogium of the entire Semitic race.”

The Memphis Appeal found “The American Jew” to be “a slander from the first page to the last and, as a piece of villainous sophistry, without parallel in literature.” Noting that Timayenis had now delivered two such tirades, the paper asserted that “it is both timely and imperative that there should be some protest.” It went on to deliver a full-throated defense of the Jewish people, citing Jewish philanthropy and Jewish contributions to American industry and commerce, and asking, “Where would America have been without the Jew?”

Similarly, a German-born Protestant named Johanna von Bohne who was incensed at Timayenis’ diatribes published a 30-page response. Although her essay also dealt in stereotypes, her thrust was unabashedly philo-Semitic, and she took special umbrage at the fact that the author had chosen to publish the works unsigned. “Anonymous letters or writings always originate in a desire to slander, blackmail and backbite,” she wrote, “and ought to be ostracized by every respectable member of society.”

In the book, Timayenis announced plans for a publication to be given over entirely to Jew-hatred. Subscriptions to The Anti-Semite would run a dollar a year. He was sure it would be welcomed because of the “widespread desire to check the diabolical methods of the Jews, these parasites of the human race” on the part of Americans. There is no evidence, however, that the monthly was ever produced.

After The American Jew appeared, Timayenis claimed to average six or seven death threats a day. One warned him to destroy the plates for The American Jew or his house would be bombed. Another was reprinted in the Times:

You are a doomed man if you go out of your house late in the evening. Two men have sworn to kill you before Christmas, but for God’s sake do not say anything about it to any one, for my own life is in danger if it became known that I wrote you this letter. I do this not to shield your life, you dog, but not to allow one dear to me to commit a crime.

The possibility the threats were made up cannot be

discounted in view of Timayenis's penchant for plagiarism and dishonesty. Regardless, they made for excellent propaganda. And he used them as a pretext to apply for a license to carry a gun.

"My life is made miserable," he complained. "I have to employ men to guard me, and I'm obliged to go around armed to the teeth." He wondered "why I should be hunted down like a dog simply because I wrote two books exposing these people. I don't profess to be a friend of the Jews, but I do maintain that I wrote nothing but the truth."

### Arrest and Trial

If Timayenis thought his life was miserable after the publication of "The American Jew," however, it took a turn for the worse in December, 1888, when he was arrested for forgery and embezzlement.

Tipped off when the bankruptcy of Minerva's printer revealed unpaid debts by the publisher, Jimmy Dickson, Timayenis's partner's husband, hurried from Philadelphia for a look at Minerva's financial records. Not only did they indicate that the printer had already been paid; that wasn't the only anomaly. Royalties never received by George Hastings, author of two of the house's publications, also appeared as paid in full. When Dickson discovered that Minerva's bank account contained only \$73, he realized that Timayenis, who had been spending freely on what the newspapers described as "gay living about town," had been doing so at the Dicksons' expense. Wasting no time, he had Timayenis arrested. Had not a friend supplied \$500 bail, he would have been remanded to The Tombs, Lower Manhattan's infamous jail.

Timayenis denied the charges. His arrest, however, dealt a blow to his reputation. Widespread coverage appeared under headlines like "The Crooked Professor" and "A Noted Man's Downfall." Ironically, several newspapers remarked that with his full black beard and mustache and "a nose of oppressive curvature," he actually looked Jewish, noting that "his Hebraic appearance, in fact, subjected him to many jests."

"Timayenis, although he denies it on every occasion, is said to have been born a Jew," the New York Times agreed, "and his noted enmity against the people of his own race is occasioned simply by a desire for notoriety." But there is no concrete evidence of any Jewish ancestry on Timayenis' part, and although notoriety may have been his motive, money is a far sounder bet.

The day before the trial, Dickson and Hastings called at Police Headquarters to report Timayenis for

threatening to shoot both of them in open court if he lost the case. They got his gun permit revoked. But there were no histrionics in court, as the judge dismissed the charges on a technicality. Timayenis then announced his intention to sue the New York Herald and the Boston Globe, both of which had reported on the case against him, for libel. The Globe then ran an obsequious article asserting that "great injustice was done Timayenis" by the publication of the charges.

That was one way of looking at things. The American Israelite gave voice to the other. "Much regret is felt that the scoundrel, Timayenis, has, by a legal quibble, escaped conviction," it wrote. "However, his character has been sufficiently exposed at the preliminary hearing to convince the most prejudiced of his villainy."

### Judas Iscariot

In June, 1889, Timayenis was back in legal hot water. George Hastings sued him for back royalties, including monies due him for work on *The American Jew*. It had been Hastings, he revealed, who had written the lion's share of the work, together with two other ghostwriters. Perhaps most damning, he called Timayenis incapable of producing a complete, original work on his own. Even his translations of Drumont in "The Original Mr. Jacobs,"

Hastings asserted, had been so poor that someone had to be recruited to polish them.

Timayenis was ultimately appointed receiver of the assets of Minerva Press, which continued to put out new books. Among them was his final work of anti-Semitic bile, "Judas Iscariot: An Old Type in a New Form."

"Since the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," he boasted at its start, "there has not appeared in the English language a book that created a sensation equal to that of 'The Original Mr. Jacobs.'" The one described the black slave, the victim of the peculiar institution inherited from Colonial times; the other, the white slave, groaning under the iron heel of Jewish oppression."

Judas Iscariot differed little from its predecessors. Timayenis blamed Jews themselves for anti-Semitism because of their "ignorance, superstition, intolerance and malice." Furthermore, these traits were in their DNA. "They are not like Catholics, Protestants or any other people ... who, aside from their religion, can be and actually are the citizens, the faithful children of their respective countries, nations, climes and tribes. It is not so with the Jew. He is Jew in race, nationality, language and religion, member of the same

international conspiracy and a parasite upon the body of all nations.”

The book warned American Jews that expulsion would be their fate. Americans, he predicted, “will turn you out of their homes, in order that you may once more take the staff of the Wandering Jew and tramp over the pathways of your ancestors.” He suggested relegating them to a tract in New Mexico “similar to the reservations of our Indians.” He had thoughtfully selected that territory for their exile because of its ostensible resemblance to their native Palestine.

Judas Iscariot earned the opprobrium of Jews as far away as the author’s native Turkey. A Constantinople-based, Greek-language newspaper was fined \$1,000 for praising it, and the local Jewish community denounced the writer and called for his imprisonment. But in the U.S., the book did not create the buzz of the earlier works. It was not even reviewed in the American press, a sure sign that Timayenis’s anti-Semitic crusade had run its course.

Minerva Press published a fourth book with anti-Semitic leanings, but it was not Timayenis’s work and it got even less attention. “Dr. Phillips: A Romance of Love and Passion,” was a novel by Julia Frankau, a self-hating British Jew who wrote under a pseudonym, about a morally degenerate London Jewish doctor with a Christian mistress who murdered his childless Jewish wife. Minerva put out its American edition with little fanfare, but the Jewish press took note. What it noticed most was the five-page New York Life advertisement in the book.

“Policy holders in the New York Life Insurance Co. are hereby informed that a portion of the money paid by them goes toward the maintenance of the infamous Minerva Publishing Co.,” The American Israelite announced, noting that the publisher “exists for the avowed purpose of driving the Jews out of the United States.” It urged readers to show the ad to the next New York Life agent who tried to sell them a policy.

### Laying Down His Pen

“I know the Jews too well to fear their mutterings of their threats,” Timayenis wrote in Judas Iscariot. “I have undertaken a battle which I know I shall win, nor will I lay down my pen before victory is mine.” But lay it down he did, and immediately after the work was published. There was no sign of The Anti-Semite, the promised monthly, or of a new work, Secrets of the

Synagogue, which he had announced early in 1890. He had milked Jew-hatred for what it was worth. It was time to move on, to new and more lucrative ventures. Some would be legitimate, and some scams.

In 1891, he inserted himself into litigation over the estate of a noted multimillionaire, demanding \$3,000 for testimony against some of the claimants. The following year he was accused of making false representations to elicit an offer to purchase Minerva Press stock. The case was ultimately decided in his favor, though one judge remarked that he didn’t think the man was telling the truth.

In 1898, Timayenis relocated to Boston, where his first order of business was to declare bankruptcy. He had no assets; just \$84,000 in debt. By 1901, however, he was managing an apparently legitimate business there. His Mentor Cigarette Company was marketing smokes under several brands, one of which was “T. T.,” his own initials.

There were more financial shenanigans. In 1906, he contested the will of an uncle who had left his \$21,000 estate to charities including a kindergarten for the blind and a home for aged women. He alleged that the man had not been of sound mind when he signed it. On another occasion, when he attempted to cash in 750 shares of the Mentor Company, a man named Charles S. Dennis obtained an injunction against him, claiming he owed him \$1,700.

Among Timayenis’s creditors was none other than John D. Rockefeller, whom he still owed \$1,000. But Rockefeller had concluded that he lacked character and principle and severed their relationship. Accordingly, Timayenis launched a broadside against the tycoon. He published two widely syndicated, tell-all articles in which he portrayed Rockefeller as a “taciturn, gloomy, secretive, sensitive and rigid” paranoid who “fears his friends, fears imaginary enemies, fears his associates, fears the world.”

After his wife died in an apparent suicide in 1909, Timayenis created the Eastern and Western Review, a magazine for Greek-Americans, and commented frequently in the press about affairs in his native Asia Minor, reliably siding with Greeks against Turks. But by 1917, ailing, he was admitted to the Tewksbury State Hospital. There the father of American anti-Semitic publishing died of arteriosclerosis and was buried in an unmarked grave.

His works, however, unfortunately lived on.

### Timayenis Rediscovered

For the first half of the 20th century, Timayenis' books were out of print. In the 1960s, however, an unapologetic racist named J. B. Stoner, Jr., founder of the far-right National States' Rights Party, happened on a copy of "The Original Mr. Jacobs" and decided it was worth reprinting.

But Stoner took a few liberties with the text. For one thing, he changed its title. Apparently "Mr. Jacobs" didn't strike him as a clear enough signal of the identity of the book's villains, so he called his edition "The Original Mr. Jew" so nobody could miss its thrust. And he added a one-page introduction that read, in part:

The Jews are embarked upon a plan to conquer the world and to rule over all other races and nations. By understanding the evil and aggressive nature of the Jew, we White Christians can better protect ourselves ... It is our duty to publish this book for the benefit of the White Aryan Race in America and throughout the world.

By 1980, "The Original Mr. Jew" was on the recommended reading list of the Ku Klux Klan, right up there with "Mein Kampf." And in 1988, Revilo P. Oliver, another white nationalist, recommended the work to readers of Liberty Bell magazine, a right-wing publication known for reprinting the infamous 1903 Russian forgery, "Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion."

What has breathed new life into Timayenis's works since then is the Internet. The worldwide web has enabled mass distribution of his books, and in this incarnation they are cost-free. It has unfortunately amplified the voices of hatemongers and enabled them to share information, locate one another, recruit new disciples and collaborate. The sad truth is that Timayenis's anti-Semitic rants, hate speech by any modern definition, have acquired the potential to reach far more readers than the author in 1888, or Stoner in 1969, could have imagined.

Their free availability is not, in itself, indicative of malicious intent. For better or worse, they are historical works with legitimate uses as source material for scholars investigating social, political and

intellectual trends of the past, even discredited ones. Timayenis's treatises are downloadable on neutral sites like archive.org and hathitrust.org, which make all varieties of out-of-copyright material available to the public and have no political axe to grind.

This is no more objectionable than the local public library keeping such works on its shelves, though of course the web promises worldwide distribution. Unless one believes in censorship of hate speech, though, one can have no argument with this. Such expression, however odious and destructive, is protected speech, at least in the U.S., unless it veers into incitement to violence or criminal activity.

More disconcerting is the content of the alt-right websites that link to these works, quote them, praise them and pretend they are factual and somehow indicative of perennial truths relevant to today. These are the pages that insist that Jews are intent on controlling the world and that tout an imaginary, Armageddon-like struggle between them and the so-called Aryan race – canards with which Jews have contended for generations.

That recent perpetrators of violence against Jews and other minorities are inspired by such sites is well-documented. Frazier Glenn Miller, for example, a Klansman convicted in the shooting deaths of three people at a Jewish community center and retirement home in Kansas in 2014, was a frequent visitor to Stormfront – one of the sites that praises Timayenis' so-called "facts" about Jews. John Timothy Earnest, who shot up a California synagogue in 2019, was also a devotee of hate sites; so was James W. von Brunn, who killed a guard at Washington, DC's Holocaust Museum in 2009. The list goes on.

### Not Much of an Anti-Semite

What has puzzled scholars about Timayenis is what motivated his attacks. Nothing known about his early years explains his enmity for Jews. And in New York, before the publication of "The Original Mr. Jacobs," he even enjoyed a cordial relationship with a nationally famous Jewish client.

The answer, it would seem, is a banal one. If there was one constant in his career apart from a love of Greece, it was a struggle for money. None of his early jobs promised riches. Only when he happened on Drumont, whose book was setting sales records in France, could

he envision real wealth: untold profits in translating, adapting and popularizing it in America.

The fact that his books were not his own work suggests that Timayenis' anti-Semitism might not have been deeply felt. The brickbats he directed at Jews were not original and perhaps not even sincere. Despite his vile works, the only time he spoke out against Jews in personal terms was when they blocked his efforts to sell books. When he told the Jewish artist who refused to illustrate *The American Jew* that he had nothing against the man's people, it may well have been the truth.

Finally, there is the fact that after Judas Iscariot he never publicly addressed the subject again. Abandoning his disparagement of Jewish people as abruptly as he had taken it up is hardly behavior one would expect of a committed, lifelong anti-Semite. It seems more like that of an opportunist who, having earned what he could out of Jew-hatred, simply moved on to other pursuits.

"The only motive, the only mainspring, of the Jew's action, has been money, money, nothing but money," Timayenis wrote in *The American Jew*. Yet the guiding principle of his life was a quest for funds. "In art, the Jews have created nothing original," he complained in "Mr. Jacobs." Yet his literary career was one of shameless borrowing of others' ideas and theft of their words. "The Jew never fails to betray his employer," he wrote in that same work. Yet this is exactly what Timayenis did to Rockefeller, his business partners, his

clients and others with whom he worked.

When he wrote in Mr. Jacobs that "hypocrisy and lying are the salient features in the Jew," he might have been describing himself.

Those who discover Timayenis on alt-right websites will read nothing but praise. But not everyone is an admirer. Google also points to an unsigned, 2015 article from the *National Herald*, a New York-based Greek-American weekly, that tars him as "the enduring shame of the Greek people." In a lengthy piece, the writer condemns him to "the rogue's gallery of Greek criminals, scoundrels and ne'er-do-wells who made the United States their home."

And if the article you are now finishing also enjoys a prolonged life on the Internet, it, too may be useful in offering readers a fact-based perspective on the man behind his screeds. They might be surprised to learn that the available evidence suggests that far from being a hero, he was rather a small man with few original thoughts and without honor, who shamelessly stole money and ideas from others. In short, a cheat, a liar, a plagiarizer, an opportunist and probably not even much of an anti-Semite.

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