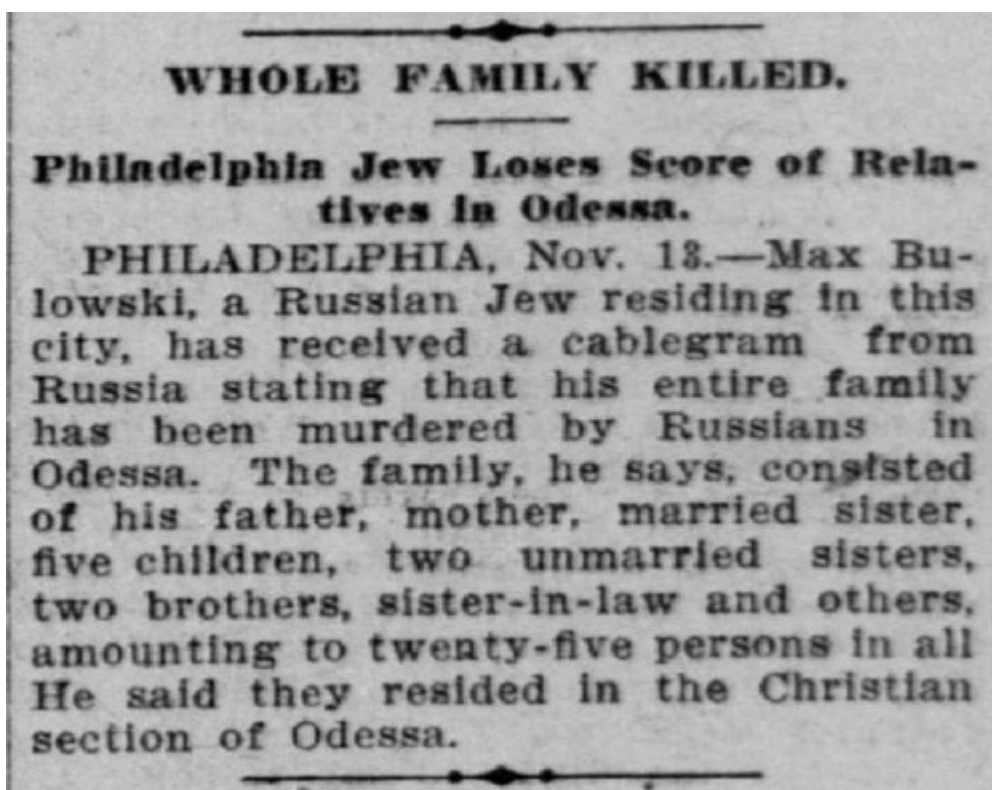


Reflections on the History of the Jewish Hoax

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“*The Times*’ accounts of what took place at each of those places contains the greatest exaggerations, and the account of what took place at some of those places is absolutely untrue.”

British Consul-General Stanley on the Russian ‘pogroms,’ January 1882.

Introduction

The 19th-century humorist Josh Billings once wrote that “there is no greater evidence of superior intelligence than to be surprised at nothing.” Demonstrating its superior intelligence on Jewish matters, few events shocked the Alt Right less than the recent arrest of a Jewish teenager in Israel for hoax bomb threats against Jewish community centers in the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. Although we are now some weeks removed from the epicenter of this hoax, the sheer scale of its attending political and media hype are deeply significant and deserve further discussion and contextualization. Of particular interest are the actions and posturing of the Anti-Defamation League, shameless in its immediate assertion that the perpetrator was a White anti-Semite, again demonstrating great tenacity in the exercise of its considerable political and cultural influence. Employing the flimsiest of narratives, underpinned by an equally suspect “history of persecution,” the ADL was able to disseminate the myth of Jewish victimhood in the media, secure top-level consultation with the FBI, and even publicly chide the President of the United States

for his “inadequate” response. In particular, Trump’s refusal to automatically assume that the bomb threats were a “hate crime” was met with bitter rebukes from several Jewish organizations.

After the “US-Israeli” culprit was apprehended, the naive might have expected some humility and soul-searching from these groups. Yet, in a development that will again fail to surprise the Alt Right, the ADL was unapologetic and intransigent. With extreme arrogance, the organization issued a statement reading: “While the details of this crime remain unclear, the impact of this individual’s actions is crystal clear: these were acts of anti-Semitism.”

Although Jews themselves seem to have learned little from the episode, it does provide us with some food for thought. From beginning to end, the episode perfectly revealed in microcosm the Jewish relationship to anti-Semitism, the construction of narratives through which Jews understand themselves, and the importance of myth and deception in sustaining Jewish identity. In short, the episode revealed the core of a singular phenomenon — the quintessential ‘Jewish hoax.’ Since no language better grapples with the concept of the compound noun than German, we may even coin a term for this phenomenon — the *Judenscherz*.

The Judenscherz

For many centuries Jews have engaged in the construction of false narratives that act to reinforce in-group identity while simultaneously disarming or disinhibiting out groups. The most powerful of these narratives can be grouped under the broad heading of the ‘victimhood narrative.’ Victimhood narratives are important in a group context because, even though they may be in large part fictional, they allow the problems and challenges of the group to be blamed on an outgroup, absolving the ingroup of agency in its own misfortunes and thus obviating the need for internal change. A further use of victimhood narratives is that they nurture the building of resentments, which can in turn provide the impetus and energy for aggressive acts against competitors. Although many ethnic and national groups have flirted with victimhood narratives, Jews are distinctive in their particularly strong aversion to changing their own version of victimhood. They have thus repeatedly had recourse to victimhood narratives throughout their history, and have adopted a unique worldview in which the entire non-Jewish world, the *goyim*, is presented as hostile — a case of ‘Jews versus the World.’ Most remarkable of all, Jews have been unique in their success in *persuading competitors and opposing groups to adopt the Jewish victimhood narrative*, disarming and disabling the more natural instinct of non-Jews to compete.

For these and lesser reasons, Jewish culture has come to master the art of the victimhood narrative and one often finds it remarked that the entire history of Jews is a history of constant suffering — the “lachrymose history of the Jews.” Although general acceptance of this over-arching historical narrative is a fairly recent

development — not much older than half a century, its now mainstream position stands stubbornly opposed to overwhelming evidence that Jews have been a privileged, protected, and economically and politically powerful group throughout recorded history. Indeed, one struggles to find a group of comparable size, at any place and in any point in time, enjoying the same level of wealth and influence. The most obvious weakness of contemporary academic and cultural treatments of Jewish matters is that they fail to adopt even a remotely critical approach to Jewish narratives. The alleged age-old victimhood of the Jews is simply taken at face value, digested, and deeply internalized, particularly in the West where Whites of Anglo and Germanic lineage have rarely, if ever, adopted a victimhood narrative of their own.

Because the Jewish victimhood narrative is, at heart, a compound of self-interested fabrications, the details that punctuate this over-arching narrative are themselves a rich constellation of exaggerations, bluffs, swindles, and hoaxes. As explored in detail in a **previous article**, perhaps the earliest example of the *Judenscherz* is the Book of Exodus, an effort at refuting a Greek and Egyptian consensus on the undesirable behaviors of the Jewish populations in their midst. In any event, the Book of Exodus was, and remains, crucial in providing a foundation myth for Jewish victimhood narratives and thus a foundation for the Jewish hoax. The putative ‘liberation’ of enslaved and persecuted Hebrews from Egypt is commemorated by Judaism every year, in the form of the *Pesach*, or Passover festival. Historian Paul Johnson remarks that Exodus “became an overwhelming memory” and “gradually replaced the creation itself as the central, determining event in Jewish history.”[1] Exodus has a power that exists independently from the trappings of religious myth, acting through the centuries as a defining narrative of victimhood, group vindication, and self-validation. Exodus is a foundation upon which Jewish identity is built.

It is interesting that Josephus, the first Jewish ‘historian’ to attempt an intellectual defense of the Exodus narrative, provides us with another very early *Judenscherz*. In one of his more famed works, *Wars of the Jews* (c. 70 A.D), Josephus recounted the 66 A.D. Alexandrian riots. According to this sanitized and embellished account some 50,000 Jews were killed (Jos., Wars, Book 2). The relevant sections of Josephus are worth citing directly:

The sedition of the people of the place against the Jews was perpetual. ... They were also permitted not only to kill them, but to plunder them of what they had, and to set fire to their houses...They were destroyed unmercifully; and this their destruction was complete, some being caught in the open field, and others forced into their houses, which houses were first plundered of what was in them, and then set on fire by the Romans; wherein no mercy was shown to the infants, and no regard had to the aged; but they went on in the slaughter of persons of every age, till all the place was overflowed with blood, and fifty thousand of them lay dead upon heaps. ... And this was the miserable calamity which at this time befell the Jews at Alexandria.

One of the more noteworthy aspects of the Josephus account is the emphasis on alleged external agitation. The animosity against the Jews in this narrative does not arise in any way from Jewish behaviors, but rather from apparently spontaneous, unwarranted, and perpetual “sedition of the people of the place against the Jews.” The violence is described as savage and sadistic — infants and the elderly are murdered in brutal fashion — and damage to property is alleged to have been extensive. Finally, the reported death toll is both remarkably ‘neat’ and remarkably high.

The narrative of Josephus was entirely fictional. Firstly, the full context of inter-ethnic hostility in the region is missing. Not only were the Jews of Alexandria at that time busily engaged in a military and diplomatic conspiracy against Roman rule, but their economic affairs and political power were also a cause for significant disquiet among the non-Jewish populace. Louis Feldman concedes in his *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (1993) that most of the hatred against Jews was “due to the importance of the positions occupied by Jews in the vast bureaucracy ... especially as tax collectors.”[2] Feldman adds that Jews in Alexandria had secured a dominant position at the upper levels of the Alexandrian shipping industry, as well as monopolies in the sale and traffic of several products. In 38 A.D. a protest against Jewish power had been provoked by “displays of Jewish wealth and power,” and by “the privileged position and influence of the Jews.”[3] Jews were also accused of dual loyalty. The extremely high international level of Jewish influence during this period was demonstrated when the Roman governor of Alexandria, Flaccus, was recalled, exiled, and then executed by order of the degenerate Emperor Caligula for allowing the protest to proceed.[4] The affair would be immortalized in yet another masterwork of *Judenscherz*, the ancient Jewish philosopher Philo’s *In Flaccum*, which used the fate of Flacco as a veiled threat to non-Jews considering a challenge to Jewish power.

The level of violence recounted by Josephus was also a total fabrication, with no modern historian supporting a death toll even remotely approaching the 50,000 claimed by the Jewish author.[5] In a pattern that would re-emerge in Western Europe in the Middle Ages, evidence shows that the Roman authorities were very much opposed to wholesale action against the Jews, preferring to protect the wealthy community and punish its prior agitations with a half-shekel tax rather than the sword. Jews were seen as too financially useful to be left at the mercy of popular retribution — the recurrent theme of Jewish history in which Jews make alliances with non-Jewish elites in opposition to popular interests. One might then ask why a wealthy and powerful community would, even in ancient times, assert a victimhood narrative. As described above, the Jewish victimhood narrative has a dual function — to reinforce aspects of Jewish identity and to manipulate competitors. In this regard it is interesting to consider the remarks of historian Ellen Birnbaum on Philo’s *In Flaccum*: “Philo may, on the one hand, wish to bolster the spirit of his fellow Jews; on the other hand, he may wish to sound a warning to Gentiles.”[6]

Early narratives like Exodus and the works of Josephus and Philo provided the template for later interpretations and revisions of certain historical and political realities. For example, references to these earlier 'persecutions' provided a false justification for the self-segregating practices of the Jews that were more palatable, especially to outsiders, than frank admissions that Jews felt themselves superior to the nations they dwelt among. We find this particularly during the Middle Ages in explanations for the ghetto experience. Indeed, one of the most remarkable omissions from the majority of mainstream accounts of the Medieval Jewish experience is the very privileged position of Jews during this period. To be clear, Jews had no automatic right of settlement in Europe. This was an age long before the concept of 'immigration' distorted the human instinct, and the settlement of foreigners in one's midst was still perceived as usurpation of more or less severity depending on the numbers involved. Jews were able to form settlements in Europe only because they were given assistance by the Christian Church in the form of Papal decrees that approved their residence, as well as granting them freedom from efforts at conversion and protection against 'maltreatment.' Without a Christian theology that taught that Jews possessed a special role in the history of humankind, it is unlikely that Jews would have been able to settle in Europe in the manner they eventually did. (Some of the most influential treatises in this regard were formulated by Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas Aquinas.) We may therefore consider the Christian settlement decrees to be the primary privilege that underlay the rise of the Jews in Western Europe in particular.

The Jews of the Middle Ages pleaded persecuted status while simultaneously enjoying unparalleled access to wealth and power. This *Judenscherz* has been passed down through the centuries and remains in robust condition even today. Jews were entirely dominant during the period. The Jews of France and Germany were allowed to transact business without restriction from the ninth until the eleventh century — three centuries of growth in financial influence during which, in the euphemistic language of Jacob Katz, their "involvement in the provision of credit was considerable." [7] Jews were allowed complete judicial control over their own communities. Further, as Katz states: "A feature of the high political standing of the Jews was the permission to bear arms ... This fact is perhaps to be viewed less as providing a means to self-protection than as a sign of political status. As a result of the permission, the Jews ranked with the knights and the feudatories who belonged to the upper strata of medieval society." [8] Jews stood over the masses, working solely for their exploitation. The Jews of the Middle Ages engaged in no productive labor, almost all of them living parasitically from moneylending. Katz writes that; "The picture of the Jew waiting at home for the Gentile to come to borrow money or to pay a debt is a realistic one." [9]

The reality of the tradition of Jewish power and economic exploitation during this period has been smothered by an extremely effective *Judenscherz* based, like the accounts of Josephus and Philo, on fictionalized accounts of extreme violence.

Historian Jonathan Elukin writes that “violence is traditionally perceived to be at the core of the Jewish experience in Medieval Europe.”[10] Like the earlier accounts, we see multiple references to spontaneous “rising levels of anti-Jewish polemic, accusations of atrocities, physical attacks, and finally expulsion.”[11] However, contrary to the *Judenscherz*, violence was in fact extremely rare, and even its alleged high point, the Second Crusade, “brought with it little actual violence against European Jewry.”[12] The much-lamented ‘blood libel,’ supposedly the arch-provocation for much of this alleged violence, was in reality so sparse and ineffectual against entrenched Jewish power that “most Jews lived their entire lives without direct experience of those accusations.”[13]

All of this is of course very reminiscent of the *Judenscherz* of the Russian pogroms of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, also of alleged atrocities committed by the German armed forces during World War Two. In these instances, allegations of extreme violence played a key role in galvanising Jewish cohesion and manipulating non-Jews — in the case of the Russian ‘pogroms,’ manipulating Western Whites into accepting millions of Jewish economic migrants masquerading as ‘refugees.’ Then, as during the current invasion of Muslims and Africans, Europeans were inundated with stories of suffering, resulting in an outpouring of empathy. During a British parliamentary consultation on the ‘pogroms’ in 1905, a Rabbi Michelson claimed that “the atrocities had been so fiendish that they could find no parallel even in the most barbarous annals of the most barbarous peoples.”[14] The *New York Times* reported that during the 1903 Kishinev pogrom: “Babies were literally torn to pieces by the frenzied and bloodthirsty mob.”[15] A common theme in most contemporary atrocity stories was the brutal rape of Jewish women, with most reports including mention of breasts being hacked off and mothers were raped alongside their daughters. Modern-day Jewish intellectuals and academics play a key role in the *Judenscherz* by repeating, reinforcing, and affirming it. For example, Joseph Brandes in his 2009 *Immigrants to Freedom* alleges that mobs “threw women and children out of the windows” of their homes, and that “heads were battered with hammers, nails were driven into bodies, eyes were gouged out ... and petroleum was poured over the sick found hiding in cellars and they were burned to death.”[16]

It was only in the 2000s that the *Judenscherz* of the Russian pogroms came under systematic attack when Catholic scholar John Doyle Klier (1944–2007) began publishing on the subject, in turn revealing the mechanical and procedural elements in the development of a Jewish hoax. Whether we are talking about the ancient pamphlets of Philo, the tomes of Josephus, or the activities of Jewish scribes in the Middle Ages, control of media and the means of communication are crucial. Klier pointed out that the pogrom hoax gained momentum in the West mainly because the then-influential British *Daily Telegraph* was at that time Jewish-owned, and was particularly “severe” in its reports on Russian treatment of Jews prior to 1881. According to Klier, one of its specialities was the spreading of “sensationalized accounts of mass rape.”[17] Other influential reporting came from a “Special

Correspondent” for the *Jewish World*. Klier remarked that the alleged itinerary of this ‘journalist’ around Russia “raises intriguing problems for the historian.”[18] While his itinerary of travel is described as “plausible,” most of his accounts are “flatly contradicted by the archival record.” His claim that twenty rioters were killed during a pogrom in Kishinev in 1881 was proven to be a fabrication by records which show that in that city, at that time, “there were no significant pogroms and no fatalities.” Furthermore, Klier argued that the atrocity stories compiled by the *Jewish World* correspondent must be treated with “extreme caution.” The reporter “portrayed the pogroms dramatically, as great in scale and inhuman in their brutality. He reported numerous accounts where Jews were burned alive in their homes while the authorities looked on.” There are hundreds of instances where he references the murder of children, the mutilation of women, and the biting off of fingers.

Klier stated that “the author’s most influential accounts, given their effect on world opinion, were his accounts of the rape and torture of girls as young as ten or twelve.” Klier found that “Jewish intermediaries who were channeling pogrom reports abroad were well aware of the impact of reports of rape, and it featured prominently in their accounts.” All such accounts were wholesale fabrications. Provoked by atrocity propaganda, the British Government undertook its own independent investigation. The most notable aspect of the independent inquiry was the outright denial of mass rape. In January 1882, Consul-General Stanley objected to all of the details contained within reports published by the media, mentioning in particular the unfounded “accounts of the violation of women.” He further stated that his own investigations revealed that there had been no incidences of rape during the Berezovka pogrom, that violence was rare, and that much of the disturbance was restricted to property damage.

Vice-Consul Law, another independent investigator, reported that he had visited Kiev and Odessa, and could only conclude that “I should be disinclined to believe in any stories of women having been outraged in those towns.” Another investigator, Colonel Francis Maude, visited Warsaw and said that he could “not attach any importance” to atrocity reports emanating from that city. When these reports were made public, states Klier, they represented “a serious setback for the protest activities” of Jewish organizations.” The *Times* of London was one of the foremost propaganda merchants during this period, a fact that is hardly surprising given that it was populated by influential Jewish journalists like Lucien Wolf, the anti-Russian foreign affairs ‘expert’ operating behind the scenes of several major newspapers. The *Times* was forced to backtrack on many of its claims, but responded spitefully by stating that the indignation of the country was still justified even if the atrocities were “the creations of popular fancy” — a retort that is more than a little reminiscent of the ADL’s response to the exposure of the recent bomb threat hoax.

The Consuls were outraged by the response of the *Times* and the ongoing influence of the Jewish hoax. Stanley reiterated the fact that his intensive investigations, which he carried out at great personal cost with a serious leg injury, illustrated that “*The*

Times' accounts of what took place at each of those places contains the greatest exaggerations, and that the account of what took place at some of those places is absolutely untrue." Enraged by *Judenscherz* circulating in Britain and America, Stanley "went right to the top," interviewing state rabbis and asking for evidence and touring pogrom sites. In Odessa, where a wealth of atrocity stories had originated, he was able to confirm "one death, but no looting of synagogues or victims set alight." There was no evidence that a single rape had taken place.

Conclusion

Despite Stanley's best efforts the Jewish narrative remained unalterably attached in Western perceptions of the 'pogroms,' and the 'pogroms' themselves take their place alongside a litany of other Jewish hoaxes in the Western imagination – an imagination in which the Jewish victimhood narrative still holds great sway. It is difficult to formulate effective responses to such frauds. Exposures of individual hoaxes are almost inevitably smothered by the more visible, audible, and oft-repeated tales of the Jewish propaganda moguls. As elating as it can be to see one of these fakes exposed, and the bomb threat hoax is certainly no exception, it should be understood that it is the narrative of Jewish victimhood is what underpins and supports the collective strength of the *Judenscherz*. Indeed, these phenomena are now mutually reinforcing – hoaxes derive their credibility and initial believability from an alleged history of persecution — a history that is itself built on hoaxes. The government, the media, many members of the public, and even many Jews believed that the recent bomb threats were real because they have literally been indoctrinated in the idea that Jews are constantly under threat of violence — a threat of violence that is said to have long historical precedent.

Ultimately, the key to bringing down the phenomenon of the Jewish hoax will not lie in the exposure of single incidents or historical events, but in the conclusive elimination of the narrative of Jewish victimhood. Jews are a powerful, protected, and very privileged elite — and they always have been. Their appeal to victimhood status would be laughable but for the fact it is one of the key strategies behind our decline.

[1] P. Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987), p.26.

[2] L. Feldman *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p.424.

[3] Ibid, p.425.

[4] Ibid.

[5] See, for example, A. Harker 'The Jews in Roman Egypt: Trials and Rebellions,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.282.

[6] Quoted in P. Van der Horst, *Philo's Flaccus: The First Pogrom* (Brill: Boston, 2003), p.16.

[7] J. Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Jewish-Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times* (Schocken: New York, 1975), p.5.

[8] Ibid, p.6.

[9] Ibid, p.38.

[10] J. Elukin, *Living Together, Living Apart: Rethinking Jewish-Christian Relations in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p.89.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid, p.96.

[13] Ibid, p.99.

[14] A. Heywood, *The Russian Revolution of 1905: Centenary Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2005) p.266.

[15] "Jewish Massacre Denounced," *New York Times*, April 28, 1903, p.6

[16] J. Brandes, *Immigrants to Freedom*, (New York: Xlibris, 2009) p.171

[17] J. Klier, *Russians, Jews and the Pogroms of 1881-82* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.399.

[18] Ibid.

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