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FORMER US secretary of state Henry Kissinger meets with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem in 1999. Kissinger was a classic example of a Jew who separated from mainstream Jewish interests and sided with those who attacked Jews, the writer argues. (Reuters)

Jumping on their high horse

Jews who separate from mainstream Jewish interests



ABOVE THE FOLD
• By MICAH HALPERN

Why do so many Jews deride Israel? It's a question I have encountered countless times since that horrific day, October 7, 2023. A question phrased in so very many different ways. It is a question that I am being asked again, in the aftermath of Israel's dazzling attack against Iran on June 13.

Today, "Why is it that so many Jews side with Hamas?" has morphed into a movement of young people and pensioners who seem to hate what Judaism and Israel stand for. A movement that is powered by their hate, disdain, and distrust of their own heritage for Judaism. A movement that stands in stark contrast to the values held dear by their mothers and fathers, and the generations of Jews who fought to live as Jews and fought for the existence of the Jewish state.

While the Jews who hate Jews are large in number and louder still in expressing their vitriol, the majority of Jews, lovers of Judaism and Israel, are stunned. For them, the looming question is: How can Jews give credibility to the attacks on Jews and cheer on attacks against Israel? They ask: What are these self-hating Jews thinking? What are they hoping to gain?

I take these questions seriously. If Jews see other Jews as self-hating, imagine what non-Jews are thinking.

MY FIRST answer is that the terminology is wrong. These Jews are not self-hating Jews; they actually like themselves. They don't

deny being Jewish. And many believe that their critique and attacks on other Jews, and on Israel, are very much what their definition of Judaism demands of them.

Essentially, what these hypercritical Jews despise are "Jewish Jews." What they cannot, and will not countenance are proud Jews. Their disdain and derision are reserved for Jewish-looking Jews and, in their minds, that category most certainly means Israeli Jews.

Personally, I do not use the term self-hating Jews. I do not encourage its use.

Self-hating simply does not accurately describe those Jews who join in pro-Hamas activities and attacks on other Jews. The term trivializes the impact of Jews who attack Israel for striking at enemies of the Jewish state and strafing Iran's nuclear infrastructure. These groups, young and old, derive perverse pleasure from jumping on their high horses and proudly pronouncing to the world what we know to be their mistaken, self-serving, and thoughtless drivil.

I use the idiom "high horse" for a reason. The meaning is clear. To jump on your high horse means to arrogantly look down upon those with whom you disagree. Once, one's status was tied to the height of their horse; the higher their horse, the higher their stature in society.

Everyone who has read Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (or has seen *Man of La Mancha*) knows this is true. Sancho, the sidekick, rode a small donkey while Don Quixote, the hero of this amazing tale, rode a tall horse.

THE LIST OF Jews who separated themselves from mainstream Jewish interests and sided with those who attacked Jews is both long

and illustrious. Henry Kissinger is a classic example. In his spectacular biography, *Kissinger: A Biography*, Walter Isaacson quotes Kissinger – as prominent a Jew as one could be in appearance and background – as saying: "If it were not for the accident of my birth, I would be antisemitic."

The author also quoted the master of "shuttle diplomacy" as saying: "Any people who have been persecuted for 2,000 years must be doing something wrong."

This is from the revered diplomat who crafted the US Middle East foreign policy and influenced the attitudes toward Israel of both US presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford.

The term self-hating Jew is not new. The expression was coined in 1930 by the controversial German-Jewish writer Theodor Lessing in his book *Der jüdische Selbsthasser* (*The Jewish Self-Hater*). Even before that, Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern political Zionism, was termed by some as a self-hating Jew. Maybe because Herzl celebrated Christmas and even had a Christmas tree in his home.

Norman Podhoretz, the conservative political commentator who wrote about "self-hating Jews," used the term quite often. For him, a self-hater was a Jew who was unduly critical of Israel. Today, there are many Jews – too many Jews – who fit that criteria.

We must brace ourselves. Their voices will be loud and their conduct unbecoming. But solace comes in knowing that those Jews are far outnumbered by proud and supportive Jews, and by lovers of Israel.

The writer is a columnist and a social and political commentator. Watch his TV show Thinking Out Loud on the Jewish Broadcasting Service.