

# Stand Up and Be Counted

## *Public Displays of Jewishness in an increasingly invasive world*

### Parashat Bamidbar 5776

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַר סִינַי, בְּאֶהָל מוֹעֵד: בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי בַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִית, לְצֵאתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם--לֵאמֹר.

**Numbers 1:1** And the LORD spoke unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying:

ב שָׂאוּ, אֶת-רֵאשׁ כָּל-עֵדַת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם, לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם--בְּמִסְפַּר נְשָׁמוֹת, כָּל-זָכָר לְגִלְגֹּלְתָם.

**2** Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male, by their polls;

*"Take the sum" – literally, "lift their heads."*

*It is interesting to know that the phrase used to instruct Moses to do the census was "Se-u Et-rosh". That means to count heads but, literally it means to lift the head. In lifting someone's head you see their eyes and you truly get a glimpse of who they are and; who they are, is a lot more than just a number.*

The Torah gives us the perfect prescription for living a life of spiritual greatness as individuals and as a nation. The book of Bamidbar, Numbers, starts off by teaching us about the census that the Jewish people performed during their time in the wilderness. This census is significant for many reasons. One reason is that we need to know that we are part of an amazing nation. Each and every Jew should be proud to be counted among our people. Learning about and exploring our heritage this time of year is one way to be counted. By committing to learning more about ourselves spiritually, we are, in effect, standing up and making a statement. Stand up and be counted! -- *Rabbi Gershon Litt*

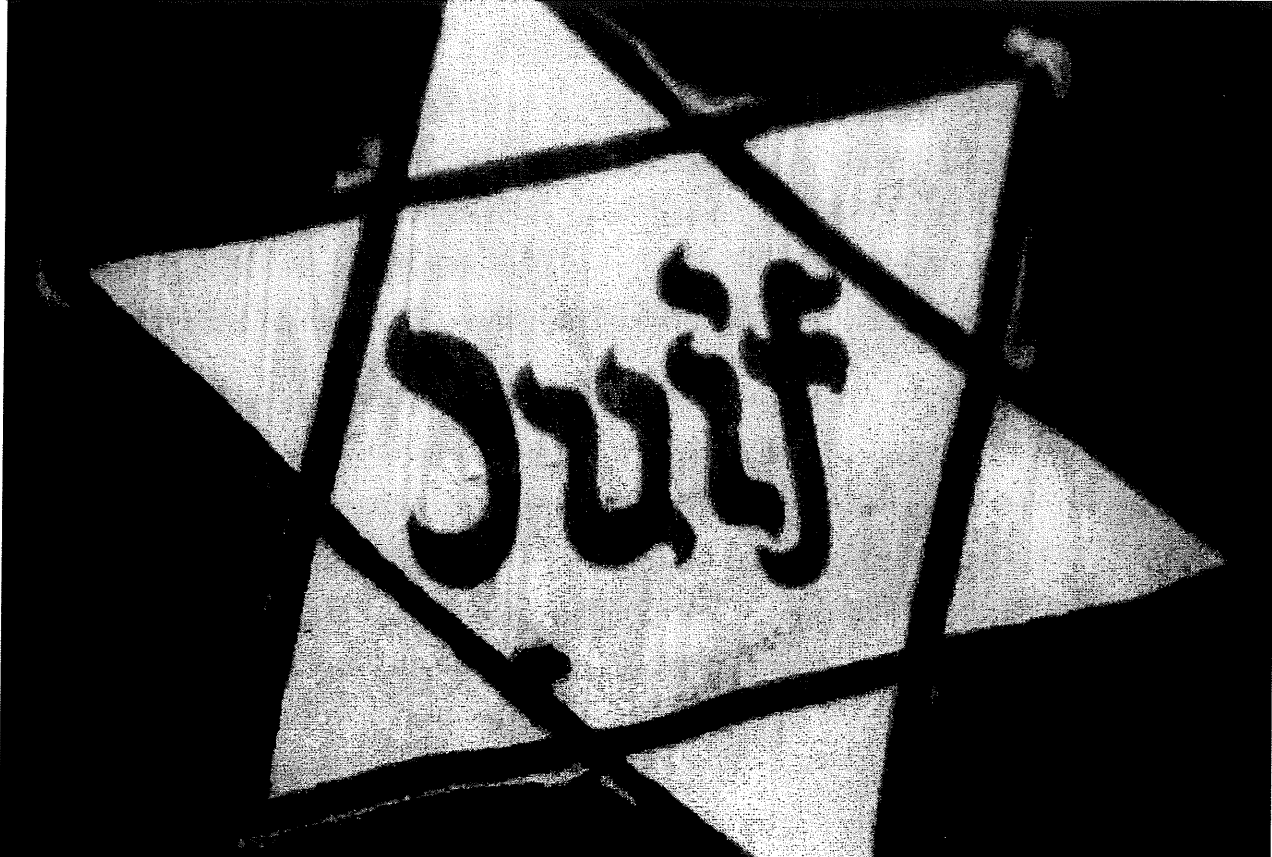
**How do Jews "wear their Jewishness on their sleeves?" When should we self-identify and when should we not? How is the (((echo))) similar to a mezuzah, Hanukkah menorah, yarmulke and circumcision? How is it more similar to a yellow star? Would you deliberately wear a yellow star to identify as a Jew?**



# The Atlantic

## A Brief Introduction to Pro-Holocaust Twitter

Donald Trump has expressed no interest in opening up death camps for Jews should he win the presidency, but his ardent supporters on the racist right have their hopes.



Wikimedia

JEFFREY GOLDBERG  
JUN 8, 2016 | POLITICS

TEXT SIZE



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SIGN UP

If there's one thing I hate more than Illinois Nazis, it's Twitter Nazis.

Correction. I don't hate them. Mainly I pity them, because their souls are so corroded, and because they are so pathetically frightened by Jews and blacks and Mexicans and gays and change and their own confused sexual identities (they are obsessed with

“cucks,” “cocks,” and “faggots”) and pluralism and, by the way, Hillary Clinton.

But I also feel pity for them because they’re so bad at anti-Semitism. I recognize high-quality, handcrafted Jew-hatred when I see it, and the far-right, which has lately been gaining attention for supporting Donald Trump’s candidacy for president (and for trolling Jews such as yours truly), is so over-the-top obvious in its deployment of anti-Semitic memes; so uncreative in the manufacturing of Judeophobic tropes (call this the banality of oven jokes); so bad at Photoshop; and so awful at spelling, that I find them as pathetic as I find them offensive.

A few days ago, I decided to co-opt one of their Twitter memes, the so-called echo-parentheses they place around Jewish names, for reasons explained here. I’ve always admired what LGBT activists did with the word “queer”—seize it from haters, and make it their own—but I did this on a whim. It caught on (this Haaretz story explains how) , and the phenomenon was met by Nazi howling, and a doubling-down on oven jokes, about which more in a minute.

I’m of two minds about alt-right online anti-Semitism. On the one hand, as someone who has written about issues concerning Jews and Israel for a number of decades now (I won’t name the number), my skin is thick like a rhino’s. Anti-semitism is not new, or shocking, to me, though I am still sometimes surprised by the speed at which social media amplifies it. And I find undisguised anti-Semitism easy to counter when compared to the anti-Semitism of the far-left, which frequently masquerades as “anti-Zionism.” (A quick explanatory aside: If “anti-Zionism” is defined, as a plain reading suggests, as opposition to the creation and continued existence of a Jewish state, then I consider it to be a form of anti-Semitism. With some notable exceptions—certain grandees of the British Labour Party come to mind—“anti-Zionists” will expend a great deal of time arguing that their hostility to the idea of a Jewish nation-state in any part of the ancestral Jewish homeland has nothing to do with Jews. It’s just a coincidence, you see.)

On the other hand, I don’t want to mitigate the damage done by the far-right. I’ve met people who are traumatized by the explosion of on-line anti-Semitism, as well as physical-world anti-Semitism—for instance, the young woman I met last night at the Sixth and I Synagogue in downtown Washington who told me that a man in a Trump hat called her a “kike” on the Metro—and so monitoring this phenomenon seems like a worthwhile endeavor. (The Anti-Defamation League will be doing just that.) In the interest of cataloguing a portion of the invective directed my way, (other journalists, including Julia Ioffe and Jonathan Weisman, have reported on their personal Nazi trolls) you will find below a partial listing of what I’ve seen in just the past couple of weeks. A number of quick observations, though, before we begin:

1. In a hopeful sign, few Nazi-style trolls use their own names. When they are bold enough to discard their anonymity, it might be time to worry more.
2. These far-right social media accounts seem to have small followings, generally, on Twitter.
3. Twitter is not the real world, and not representative of the world as a whole. Though I would note that I also receive a large amount of anti-Semitic invective via e-mail (and, charmingly, through the U.S. Postal Service).
4. Many of these trolls will adopt Jewish-seeming names as their Twitter handles. They find this amusing.
5. A very large portion of these accounts associate themselves with Trump in some way, though it should be pointed out—I find it hard to believe I’m writing this sentence—that Donald Trump himself has expressed absolutely no interest in opening concentration camps for Jews, should he win the presidency. The white nationalist far-right has decided, though, that Trump will advance its interests.

The first example in this small catalogue is something I’ve seen quite a bit in the past couple of weeks, both in my e-mail inboxes and on Twitter. This is me with a superimposed yellow star on my forehead.



**Fädernesland**

@Fadernesland1



Follow

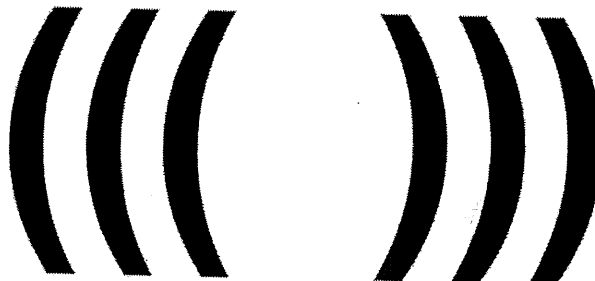
@JeffreyGoldberg @joppenheimer88

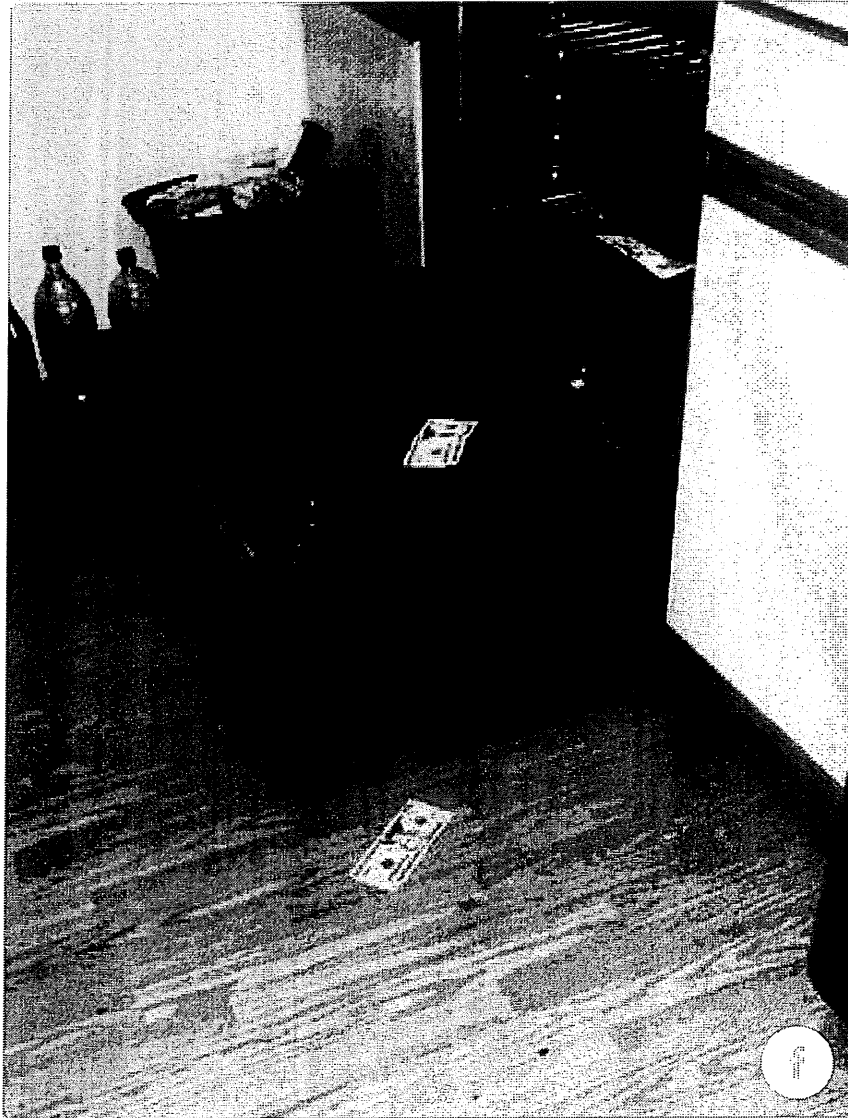




Next is an instance of what might be the most common theme: Trolls encouraging me to follow a trail of dollar bills into an oven. I would point out here only that these trolls do not understand the mechanics of death camps; the victims of the Nazi death camps were murdered mainly in gas chambers. Only after death were their bodies cremated in ovens. Of course, these people are not scholars of the Holocaust. As Julia Ioffe and others have pointed out, many of them are Holocaust deniers, even as they express admiration for genocide. The message: “The Holocaust never happened, but it was awesome.”

## **The (((Echo))) Symbol: Pride and Prejudice**





Here is a photoshopped image of me as a concentration camp prisoner (two places in front of the journalist Yair Rosenberg). It's always nice to wake up in the morning to images like this.



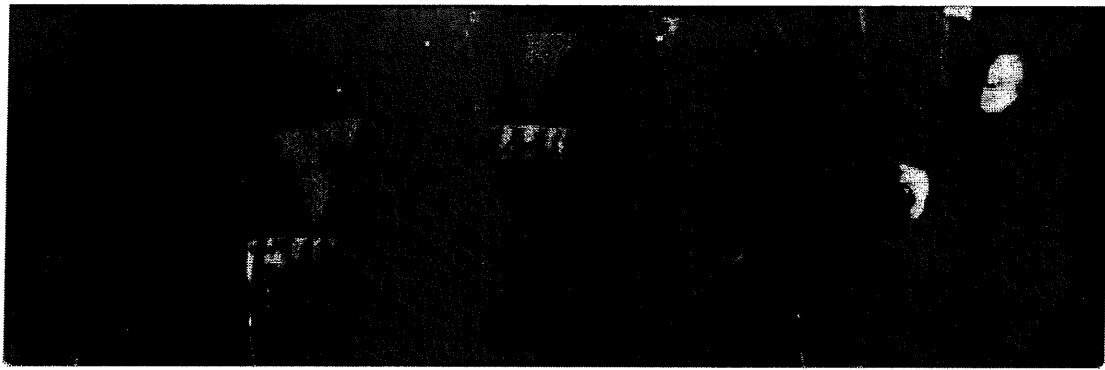
**STATICBOOLEAN**  
@static\_boolean



 Follow

@Yair\_Rosenberg





1:05 AM - 5 Jun 2016



Here is an example of unoriginal oven-centered trolling. This person’s Twitter bio describes him as an “oven technician.”



**ClintonSnuke**  
@ClintonSnuke



Follow

Why do Jews get so triggered when we mention ovens?

(((Goldberg))) @JeffreyGoldberg

“Go find an oven” is pretty typical anti-Jewish Twitter invective these days.  
[twitter.com/NotHipsterToas...](https://twitter.com/NotHipsterToas...)

1:51 PM - 30 May 2016



I include this one mainly because of the Twitter handle, “Mengele matters.” For those unfamiliar with the name, you can read more here.



**Mengele Matters**  
@MengeleMatters



Follow

@JeffreyGoldberg Getting Jews to point themselves out is probably our best trolling since



# getting feminists to piss themselves

RETWEETS 3 LIKES 11



11:37 AM - 3 Jun 2016



I include this one as an example of the juvenile approach many Twitter anti-Semites take. I'm hoping the ADL identifies some of these trolls, and let's us know how old they are.



**Paul Town**  
@PAULTOWN\_



Follow

Nazis here, Nazis there, Nazis everywhere! So many Nazis. Scary!

(((Goldberg))) @JeffreyGoldberg

@bubba\_w21 Nazis do it on Twitter to Jews, so I decided to engage in an act of cultural appropriation.

RETWEETS 3 LIKES 17



11:56 AM - 3 Jun 2016



Another oven-oriented Nazi fellow:



**Gaeer Grimsrud**  
@Gaeer\_\_Grimsrud



Follow

@JeffreyGoldberg Good job with the parenthesis. If you could just go on ahead and climb into an oven now, we'll be all set. Get to it, champ

12:55 PM - 3 Jun 2016

This was a very common illustration directed my way (and in other directions as well). The message was that we should return the (( )) to the Nazis and use menorahs instead.



I'm pretty much a free speech absolutist, but when this one came over the transom, I did wonder about the level of effort Twitter is making to reduce the volume:



AJ Liberphile @AJ\_Liberphile · Jun 3

@JeffreyGoldberg Feel free to appropriate various other facets of P' culture, Jew, like showers and ovens



Extreme fear of Hillary Clinton, and her relationship with Jews, is another theme:



Wilhelm Von Judengas

@WJudengas



Follow

Meet Hillary Clintons Supreme Court. I'm sure they will maintain the best interest of our nation and constitution



RETWEETS

22

LIKES

35



This drawing, which I've received a number of times, holds that Donald Trump is bringing about a 4th Reich, and vampire Jews such as myself are doomed. Please take note of the "Happy Kristallnacht" message in the lower right corner.



Again, the common belief, or hope, is that Trump will initiate a new Holocaust. The Nazi-leaning Trump extremists never appear to address the fact that Trump's daughter and son-in-law, and grandchildren, are Jewish, or that Trump spends essentially no time talking about Jews, and a great deal of time talking about Muslims and Mexicans.



**Joachim Hoch**

@shitlord14



Follow

@JeffreyGoldberg thanks Jews for helping us out! When trump gets elected this whole thread is going right in an oven and/or deported

11:49 PM - 4 Jun 2016



Again, not clever:



Exitness  
@HisExitness



+ Follow

.@JeffreyGoldberg Pardon my ignorance, but is the Jewish equivalent of faggotry's "coming out of the closet", 'coming out of the oven'?

1:25 PM - 3 Jun 2016

Finally (for now), this illustration, which I've seen many times, advances the common pro-Nazi theme that the Jews were the aggressors in Germany, and that Hitler was operating defensively when he initiated the Holocaust, except that he didn't initiate the Holocaust, because the Holocaust is a lie perpetrated by the Jews, who deserve to die in a Holocaust:

**ballito**  
STOCK EXCHANGES

**Daily Express**  
LONDON, THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 1941. FIVE PENNES.

**St Ivel**  
CHEESE  
Aids digestion  
Ed. 6d. 6d. 6d. each.

**JUDEA DECLARES WAR ON GERMANY**  
*Jews Of All The World Unite In Action*

**BOYCOTT OF GERMAN GOODS**  
**MASS DEMONSTRATIONS IN MANY DISTRICTS**  
**DRAMATIC ACTION**

**HIGHER WAGES FOR STEEL WORKERS**  
**AN INCREASE OF THREE SHILLINGS A WEEK**

**MR. MacDONALD EXPLAINS HIS TOUR**  
**"PEACE CAN BE KEPT IN EUROPE"**

**New "Sweep" Bill In The Dail**  
**MR. DE VALERA AND STATE CONTROL**  
**SECRET MEASURES**

**THE SIGHTS OF AN ILL**

**OFFICERS DAYS OF LEAVE**

**LABOUR LEADER**

**LATE NEWS**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**JEFFREY GOLDBERG** is a national correspondent for *The Atlantic* and a recipient of the National Magazine Award for Reporting. He is the author of *Prisoners: A Story of Friendship and Terror*.

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## How Jews are re-claiming a hateful neo-Nazi symbol on Twitter

To combat the online vitriol, Jews and non-Jews alike are adopting a controversial new method which, some critics say, is equivalent to pinning a yellow 'Jude' star to one's shirt.

By Andrew Esensten | Jun. 7, 2016 | 8:28 AM | 6

It is not a particularly pleasant time to be a Jew on the Internet.

In recent weeks, Jewish journalists, political candidates and others with Jewish-sounding names have endured a torrent of anti-Semitic vitriol online, much of it coming from self-identified supporters of U.S. Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump. Until it was removed last week, a user-generated Google Chrome extension allowed those who installed it to identify Jews and coordinate online attacks against them. It has gotten so bad that the Anti-Defamation League has announced that it is forming a task force to address racism and anti-Semitism on social media.

Last week, Jeffrey Goldberg, a national correspondent for *The Atlantic*, decided to fight back. He changed his Twitter username to (((Goldberg))), co-opting a symbol that neo-Nazis and others associated with the so-called "alt-right" use to brand Jews on blogs, message boards, and social media. The "echoes," as they are called, allude to the alleged sins committed by Jews that reverberate through history, according to *Mic*, a news site geared toward millennials that first explained the origins of the symbol.

Then Yair Rosenberg of *Tablet Magazine*, another popular troll target, encouraged his followers to put parentheses around their names as a way to "raise awareness about anti-Semitism, show solidarity with harassed Jews and mess with the Twitter Nazis." Several journalists and other Jewish professionals followed suit, and the "thing," as Internet "things" are wont to do, took off.

Jonathan Weisman, a *New York Times* editor who changed his username to (((Jon Weisman))) over the weekend, wrote on Twitter that the campaign was a way to show "strength and fearlessness" in the face of bigotry. Weisman was the victim of a barrage of anti-Semitic abuse last month after he tweeted the link to an article in the *Washington Post* that was critical of Trump. Weisman retweeted much of the filth — including memes of hook-nosed Jews and depictions of Trump in Nazi regalia — that came his way. "Better to have it in the open," he wrote. "People need to choose sides."

In Israel, where Twitter is less popular than other social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, a small number of journalists, including *Haaretz's* Barak Ravid, joined the cause.

Many non-Jews also added the parentheses to their usernames out of solidarity. Among them was NAACP President Cornell Brooks, who tweeted on Saturday: "Founded by Jews & Blacks, the haters might as well hate mark our name [too]: (((@NAACP)))".

Neera Tanden, president of the Center for American Progress, a left-leaning think tank, told *Haaretz* that she joined the campaign after being targeted on Twitter. "I don't know if they thought I was Jewish or that they are just awful," said Tanden, who is Indian-American and not Jewish. "Anti-Semitism is as hateful as racism and sexism and as a progressive, I stand against it."

Yet the cheeky campaign struck some Jews as unseemly, the virtual equivalent of willingly pinning a yellow "Jude" star to one's shirt. On Sunday, the journalist Julia Ioffe tweeted that she was "really uncomfortable with people putting their own names in anti-Semitic parentheses."

Ioffe, who filed a police report in Washington, D.C. last month after receiving threatening messages following the publication of an article she wrote about Melania Trump, told *Haaretz* that she understood the purpose of the campaign and was not calling for others to abstain from participating. Nevertheless, she said, it only seemed to provoke more harassment.

"The second I started tweeting about it, all those bottom dwellers immediately rose to the surface and said things like, 'You're doing our work for us,'" Ioffe said.

Goldberg explained that his goal was simply to mock neo-Nazis by reclaiming and neutralizing an element of their online culture, such as it is. He said he was inspired by "the way the LGBT community took the word 'queer' and made it their own." (On Sunday, he reversed the parentheses around his last name. Why? "Just because I can.")

In a statement to *Haaretz*, ADL CEO Jonathan A. Greenblatt wrote: "There's no single antidote to anti-Semitism posted on Twitter. An effective response includes investigating and exposing the sources of hate, enforcing relevant terms of service, and promoting counterspeech initiatives. From our perspective, the effort by Jeffrey Goldberg and others to co-opt the echo symbols is one positive example of clever counterspeech." On Monday, the ADL added the triple parentheses to its online hate symbols database.

The parentheses are beginning to disappear from Jewish Twitter usernames as "our little war on #altright," in Weisman's words, seems to have reached a stalemate. But the debate about whether or not it was "good for the Jews" to out themselves in such a way is still roiling.

Mordechai Lightstone, a rabbi in Brooklyn who works in the Jewish social media world, said it was dangerous "if we only subvert these hateful acts and use that as the sole basis to define our identities." A better solution, he said, would be to "channel this into positive actions expressing Jewish pride."

How best to fight back against the anti-Semitic trolls is both a moral and logistical dilemma, according to Ioffe. She noted that it is impossible to determine how many there are and whether or not they are real people or bots. (The "Coincidence Detector" Chrome extension that automatically put parentheses around Jewish-sounding names had been downloaded about 2,500 times before it was removed by Google for violating its policy against harassment.)

"It's hard to figure out how to strike that balance between standing up to them and giving them too much attention, between de-fanging them and giving them more fodder," she said. "I think it's something that we Jewish journalists are going to have to continue to grapple with."