Antisemitic Visual Guide

Antisemitic imagery has long played a central role in spreading hate—not just through words, but through powerful visuals that stick in people's minds. These images work like viral messages, embedding dangerous ideas about Jews into popular culture and political discourse. For centuries, such visuals have portrayed "the Jew" as a singular, threatening figure: greedy, manipulative, and inhuman. They've been used by regimes and movements to rally supporters by identifying a supposed common enemy.

Today, these same visual codes are still in use—often repackaged as memes or political cartoons—and they're showing up far beyond the usual extremist circles. Even mainstream artists or influencers may unknowingly adopt these visual cues. The purpose remains the same: to dehumanize Jews and strip them of empathy. Whether through portrayals as rats, vampires, or shadowy global puppet masters, these images send the message that Jews are not just different—they are dangerous. Worse still, modern antisemitic memes often flip history on its head: they cast Jews not as victims of hate, but as its perpetrators—depicting Israelis as Nazis or accusing Jews of the very violence they've historically endured. This guide is here to help readers understand how these images are still being used today, recognize their historical roots, and see how the antisemitism of the past continues to echo—almost unchanged—into the present.

# 1. The Jew Behind Every Face ("Happy Merchant" Meme)

Historical Roots:

The Happy Merchant meme originated in the 1980s as part of a larger racist piece of art by white supremacist artist Nick Bougas, who published under the pseudonym "A. Wyatt Mann." The artwork was disseminated in racist newsletters produced by Tom Metzger, a prominent figure in the white supremacist movement. The original cartoon included not only the Happy Merchant character but also dehumanizing depictions of black people, rats, and cockroaches, equating Jews and black individuals to vermin. In 2001 the cartoon of the Jew was cropped from the piece, and began circulating the internet solo, gaining popularity on sites such as 4chan, gab and 8kun, where it was further spread and given the names *Happy Merchant*, *Merchant Face* and *Jew Face*.

The meme features stereotypical traits historically used to vilify Jews— such as hooked noses, hunched posture, and sly expressions — similar to those found in Nazi propaganda. In the digital age, it became the most widely circulated antisemitic image among white supremacists, often adapted into thousands of variations that maintain its core message of portraying Jews as deceitful manipulators. The meme is used to symbolize historical and modern day antisemitic tropes, such as Jewish control over the world, Jewish greed, holocaust denial, and general white supremacist talking points.

Contemporary use:

Today, the Happy Merchant remains one of the most widely recognized and reused antisemitic memes in online hate spaces. It is frequently posted on platforms like 4chan, Telegram, Reddit (in fringe subreddits), Gab, and X, often as a reaction image to discussions about wealth, media, or perceived global control. Its purpose is to "identify" or mock someone seen as Jewish, or to accuse Jews of manipulation, greed, or deception without explicitly stating it. The meme is endlessly remixed—sometimes layered over images of public figures, turned into stickers, or stylized with contemporary design—but it always preserves the key visual features: hooked nose, hunched posture, rubbing hands, and a scheming grin.

In coded online discourse, the Happy Merchant is also used in combination with terms like "(((they)))", "the cabal", or "you know who", allowing users to spread antisemitic content while skirting platform moderation policies. More recently, AI-generated or animated variants have appeared in far-right meme channels, where the merchant character is inserted into real political events or photoshopped into news imagery to falsely attribute Jewish orchestration of world events. Despite occasional removals by platforms, the meme continues to thrive in hate spaces because it condenses multiple antisemitic tropes—greed, conspiracy, control—into one instantly recognizable image.
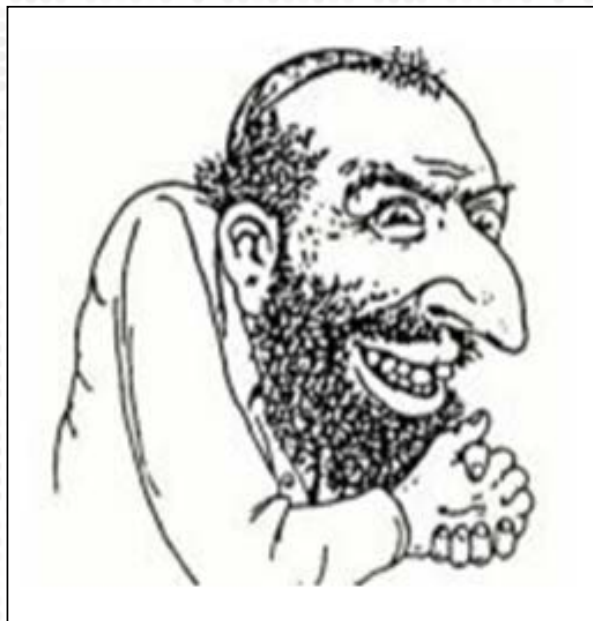
2. The Octopus

Historical Roots:

This originated in late 19th-century and early 20th-century Europe, notably the "*La Pieuvre Juive*" (Jewish Octopus) image by Charles Lucien Léandre (1898). The Nazis later popularized this imagery extensively in propaganda such as the film *Der Ewige Jude* (1938), depicting Jews as malevolent global manipulators. The meme was originally used to symbolize Jewish people's control and influence over society and politics. The octopus meme is also used in relation to the elders of zion conspiracy, claiming that Jews control the world.

Contemporary Use:

Frequently employed to imply alleged Jewish dominance over global finance, media, and politics.

Antisemitic cartoon by Seppla (Josef Plank) depicting Churchill. Circa 1938, Germany. Credit: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Library of Congress[1]

3. Blood Libel/ Blood Eater

Historical Roots:
The Blood Libel myth is one of the oldest and most persistent antisemitic conspiracies. It falsely accuses Jews of murdering non-Jewish — especially Christian — children to use their blood for religious rituals, particularly for baking matzah during Passover. This myth first appeared in 12th-century England with the case of William of Norwich (1144) and later Simon of Trent (1475), among others. These accusations led to massacres, expulsions, and pogroms throughout Europe.

In medieval art and pamphlets, Jews were depicted as grotesque, hook-nosed figures surrounding the mutilated body of a Christian child, often with ritualistic overtones. Such imagery solidified visual associations between Jews and demonic blood rituals.

Contemporary Use (Blood Eater Revival):
In the digital era, the blood libel has been revived with new visual tropes. The term "blood eater" has become a modern slur - especially in Arabic and some far-right conspiracy circles - used to suggest Jews are inhuman or vampiric. Variants appear in memes, cartoons, and AI-generated images showing Israeli or Jewish figures as monsters devouring babies, feasting on blood, or holding bloody knives.

These memes often go viral during times of conflict involving Israel, particularly after military operations in Gaza or Lebanon. The Jewish star (Magen David) is frequently shown dripping with blood, or Israeli politicians are edited to resemble vampires, cannibals, or butchers. Such memes circulate widely on Telegram, X, Facebook, and TikTok - sometimes in the form of political cartoons in state-backed media in the Middle East.

Modern iteration of the blood libel, shared on social media with the caption, "The Jewish Ritual Murder of White Christian Children"

3. The Fat Banker

Historical Roots:
Originally proliferated during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Russia and Europe through propaganda, notably the Protocols of the Elders of Zion (1903), a forged document alleging Jewish plots for global economic dominance. Nazi Germany further propagated this stereotype extensively. The fat banker meme is connected to the idea that Jews are greedy and control all money. The idea that Jews are greedy and control money come from the European middle ages, when Jews were forced into banking roles, because handling money was forbidden for Christians.

Contemporary Use:
In contemporary times, the ideas propagated by the Fat Banker meme are often represented through references to Rothschild, a famous and successful Jewish banking family. This myth aims to represent Jews as untrustworthy, greedy, and controlling, and shift the blame of economic issues to Jews.

Often resurfaces after economic crises, framing Jews as financial manipulators and profiteers.

4. The Puppet Master

The Puppet Master meme portrays Jews as secret controllers, quietly manipulating politics, economics and society at large. This meme plays into the myth that Jews control the world from behind the scenes. This meme is connected to the Elders of Zion myth, alleging that Jews control the world. This meme was often found in Nazi propaganda, but is still used today to depict Jews and Israelis

#ZOG #NewWorldOrder #TheGreatAwakening

5. The Rat

Historical Roots:
This image originates from Nazi Germany, where Jews were frequently depicted as rats in posters, films (such as Der Ewige Jude), and cartoons. The Nazis used vermin imagery to dehumanize Jews and justify their extermination. Rats were shown spreading disease, infiltrating society, and destroying nations from within

Contemporary Use:
Today, this imagery is often rebranded through digital cartoons and memes, especially on anonymous forums and far-right Telegram channels. Jews are depicted as rats undermining Western civilization or causing pandemics. Sometimes merged with imagery related to George Soros or Israeli leaders.

Conclusion

Recognizing antisemitic imagery isn't just about identifying offensive content—it's about understanding how hate spreads, mutates, and persists. These visual codes, often disguised as jokes or political commentary, are rooted in centuries of propaganda that enabled discrimination, exclusion, and violence against Jews. While the language and platforms have evolved, the core messages remain strikingly familiar. Today, antisemitic attacks come from across the political spectrum—far-right nationalists, far-left ideologues, Islamist extremists, and conspiracy theorists all find ways to recycle the same hateful symbols and narratives.

Historically, Jews have often been scapegoated during moments of upheaval—wars, plagues, economic crises—and the digital age has only made it easier to mobilize that hatred globally, instantly, and anonymously. By learning to recognize these images, understanding their historical context, and seeing how they resurface during modern world events, we empower ourselves to push back. This guide is not only a tool for awareness—it's a step toward breaking the cycle and protecting our communities from the consequences of unchecked antisemitism.

The examples in this guide represent some of the most well-known and widely circulated antisemitic visual tropes— but they are by no means the only ones. New variations emerge every day, often adapted to current events, political trends, or internet culture. Classic antisemitic imagery is constantly being rebranded, distorted, or disguised to bypass detection and spread hate in more subtle ways. Can you identify them? If you come across a meme, cartoon, or visual online that echoes these historical patterns of antisemitism—even if it's disguised as humor or political critique—we invite you to share it with us. Together, we can expand this guide and expose the full scope of how antisemitism continues to evolve.

Send your findings to **info@foantisemitism.org**
and help us document and challenge digital hate wherever it appears.